OUR CONFERENCE, PAGE 723

THE

# LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

*Editor:* R. PALME DUTT

Volume 13 December, 1931 Number 12

*PRINCIPAL CONTENTS*

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*NEW PROBLEMS*
R.P.D.

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G. HARDY

Left Socialism and Communism
W. RUST and B. J. BOOTHROYD

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Book Review :: Index to Vol. XIII

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# *The Labour Monthly*

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

# OUR CONFERENCE

*OUR Conference of LABOUR MONTHLY readers to discuss the Present Economic Crisis and the Political Situation will be held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, December 13th, in the Conference Hall at Swinton House, 324 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1 (corner of Swinton Street, a few minutes' walk from King's Cross).*

*We have booked the hall for the afternoon and evening. The Conference will thus be able to continue with a break for tea about 5 o'clock, starting again 6 o'clock till 10 p.m.*

*R. O. Bridgeman will take the chair.*

*The first opener in the discussion will be H. Stevens on the "Economic Crisis and the Question of Managed Currency." The main heads of his speech will be as follows :*

The Economic Crisis : the Marxian position. (I.) Intensifying crises with growing contrast between increasing wealth of capitalists and increasing poverty of workers. (II.) Unequal development of capitalism involving rise of new imperialisms and new conflicts.

British imperialism : its tendency to stagnate in development owing to growth of parasitism. The attack on its domination through rise of new imperialisms.

The struggle for the gold standard marks a culminating point in the crisis, viewed in terms of the fight for supremacy. The abandonment of the gold standard an admission of defeat. The necessity to find a new basis. Depreciation of the pound, why not greater ? Can a new basis be found ? Either (1) Return to the gold standard—impossible in present situation ; or (2) Stabilisation at a lower rate—building on shifting sands ; or (3) Managed currency—gold standard an inherent necessity for capitalism. Yet gold standard is itself a barrier to unlimited development desired by capitalism. A managed currency for

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Britain involves the stagnation of stationary though unstable equilibrium. Hence it would itself result in intensification of the crisis. The impossibility of a internally managed currency in a capitalist world on a gold standard. An international managed currency a newly-adopted theory of capitalist economists which like an internal managed currency has no relation to the fundamentally competitive and chaotic nature of capitalism.

*W. Rust will follow on "The Political Situation and the Future of the Labour Party." His speech will deal with the following questions :*

The financial crisis has brought about a quite new political situation in Britain and the dividing lines between the political parties are being changed very rapidly. The constitution of the capitalist state is also being transformed, definitely in the direction of Fascism.

Is Fascism possible in Britain ? What are the main tendencies of the advance towards Fascism ? What part does the Labour Party play in this process ?

The Labour Party was heavily defeated in the Election and practically destroyed as an Opposition within Parliament. What is its future ? Can it move to the left or is it bound to become more and more enmeshed in the wheels of the capitalist state machine ? The I.L.P. is a component part of the Labour Party and supported its programme in the Election even though its candidates were not officially endorsed. The relations between the I.L.P. and Labour Party and the possibility of disaffiliation present a quite new and important situation. What's wrong with the I.L.P. ? Should it leave the Labour Party ?

The Communist Party. Why the Party increased its poll in the General Election and the possibilities of a mass revolutionary party in Britain.

*On the basis of the material provided by these two opening statements the Conference will then be thrown open for discussion.*

*It is hoped that this discussion, as R.P.D. points out in his Notes of the Month in this month's issue of the MONTHLY (December), will go some way towards getting all of us clearer on what are the lines on which the working class can advance in the immediate future.*

*For any further information on this Conference, readers are asked to write to the Manager, THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, Theobald's Road, London, W.C.1.*

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# NOTES OF THE MONTH

*A Discussion Conference—Basic Questions—The Economic Crisis — British Crisis and World Crisis — National Government's Policy—The Contradiction—Debts Question —An Example—The Aftermath of Restoration—Gold and the Crisis — Creditors in Conflict — Britain, France, America—Manchuria—War Prospects— National Government as War Government— General Election Significance—Labour Party Decline—The Problem of the Next Stage*

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found details of the conference of LABOUR MONTHLY readers which is to be held this month in London. The purpose of this conference is solely discussion and threshing out of current issues; the tasks of organisation, of formulation of policy, and of action lie elsewhere. At no time was discussion and interchange, on the widest basis among the varying viewpoints of the active elements in the working class movement, more necessary. Already at the time when the conference was first projected, in August, it was abundantly clear that the new stage of crisis, expressed in the financial crisis, the fall of the Labour Government, and the formation of the National Government, was raising a host of new conditions and problems for which the thinking of the movement was little prepared, and which needed fuller thrashing out. Since then, the further stage marked by the collapse of the pound in September confirmed this need. To-day, with the outcome of the General Election, with the overwhelming slump of the Labour Party, most heavily in just the areas of the industrial working class; with the rising working class wave of struggle alongside the Labour decline; with the extreme Conservative majority in parliament and beginning of the National Government's tariff war and intensified offensive against the workers; the need on every side is greater than ever. The significance of the outcome of the General Election, of the beginning of the

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decline of the Labour Party, is enormous for the whole future of the working class. The whole working class is faced with the problems of a new stage. The questions of Whither and What Road are presented with unexampled urgency. Discussion and clearing of the issues needs to be going forward throughout the movement, alongside of action and the carrying forward of the struggle.

WHAT are the questions that face any such attempt at a more basic discussion of the present situation? There are two issues that gather around them all the complex of current questions. The first issue is the character of the economic crisis, of the world crisis and the British crisis as part of it, its causes, consequences and perspective. The answer to this is decisive for our general line, and our consequent relation to the policies of the National Government, of the Labour Party and the various groups of reformers, as well as for the conditions of advancing the struggle. The second issue, following from the first, is the character of the present stage of the working class movement in Britain. This question is now brought into sharp relief by the situation following the general election. What is to follow the present decline and discrediting of the Labour Party? How is the new rising wave to find its most effective way of advance? How is the advance of Conservatism, drawing profit from the exposure of the Labour Party, to be checked? Does the path lie through a repetition of the Labour Party experience? If not, what are the new forms? How are the leftward moving forces in the working class to find effective unity in the struggle, while at the same time carrying forward the task of political clearing and differentiation, essential to reach revolutionary consciousness and strength? On all these questions the contributions and answers of all from their thinking and experience, once they can be brought into collective discussion, can help to build up a common understanding.

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TAKE first the question of the world crisis, which is the necessary starting point. It might seem an elementary question to ask whether the crisis is a crisis of capitalism, that is, the inevitable working out of the contradictions of capitalism to an extreme point. Nevertheless, this is already the first basic question. For all the capitalist reform schools, with the Labour and I.L.P. experts in their wake, allege that the crisis is a crisis of mistaken policies of capitalism, whether of the maldistribution of gold, of reparations and debts, of tariffs or free trade, of currency and credit policies, *i.e.*, that if these were only corrected, capitalism could work successfully. This is the first great difference of approach. If we take this latter line, then inevitably follow the varying lines of policy of the National Government, of the Labour Party, or of the Independent Labour Party, the lines of revision of reparations and debts, of tariffs, or of new currency and credit policies. But if we are once satisfied that all these phenomena, which are put forward as causes of the crisis, are in reality only expressions and forms of the contradictions of capitalism, and not their cause (thus the maldistribution of gold, for example, is not the cause of the contradictions of capitalism, but their consequence), then inevitably our whole line in relation to the crisis is a completely different one: the line of struggle against capitalism, not only against the immediate capitalist attacks, but to utilise the crisis to press forward to the overthrow of capitalism as the sole solution, in place of following will o'-the-wisp policies for saving capitalism. The apparently negative line of "no cuts," &c., or of fighting for increases to meet rising prices, becomes in fact the necessary positive line of struggle, because it prepares and mobilises the class front for the fight against capitalism, for the overthrow of capitalism as the sole solution.

IN previous issues we have examined the crisis in detail as a stage in the development and break-up of British capitalism; as the beginning of the break-up of the whole parasitic super-profit basis of the capitalist structure in Britain, with consequent extreme reactions on capitalist social

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policy towards the working class, and rapid weakening of the whole basis of Social Democracy. This process of transformation has shown itself with the sharpest clearness in the general election, with the National bloc of concentration for war on the workers dominating nine-tenths of Parliament in a manner without parliamentary parallel, and the Labour Party, universally discredited, beginning for the first time to go downwards. But this is only a beginning. We have now to face the consequent situation, the line of the National Government, and where it leads; and the position of the working class movement in view of the decline of the Labour Party. What is now the perspective of the situation? To answer this question, it is necessary to take into view the international situation, the issues of which more and more conspicuously dominate the whole position.

THE crisis in Britain is a part of the world crisis, and cannot be treated in isolation from it. This is obvious, and in words a commonplace of every capitalist approach. Nevertheless, in fact, it is the inevitable character of the policy of capitalism, of the policy of the National Government, to treat the problem as a specifically British problem, a disorder of British industry, finance and trade, and to set forward as the main task the correcting of the British "balance of trade." Imports are too high; exports are too low; there is a passive balance of payments; with the dwindling foreign tribute income, there is no net credit balance for new foreign investment and financial operations; the whole financial position goes down. What is the remedy? Force down imports, and force up exports. Economy measures and depreciation of the pound, restricting consumption and thus imports; anti-dumping and tariff legislation; cheapening of the costs of production by cuts and depreciation of the pound —this is the essence of the line of the National Government, the line presented to overcome the crisis and restore a stable position.

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BUT this line is in fact the line of every government in every capitalist country at the present stage. It is only necessary to universalise this line, in order to see that it automatically defeats itself, that it not only solves nothing but can only aggravate every driving force of the crisis. To force down imports to the lowest point, to force up exports, to compel a surplus of exports, and to use every device of tariffs, subsidies, exchange regulations and dumping to achieve this end—this is the mutually destructive line of every capitalist government in the present crisis. So is reached the present glaring world contradiction, expressed in the comment of the *Economist*. (November 7, 1931.)

> Cabinet after Cabinet, all round Europe, is seeking desperately to " correct the balance " by restricting imports and encouraging exports by all means in its power. The spectacle of Europe is one of a group of countries all straining their efforts to sell, in order to meet foreign obligations, yet preventing other nations from attaining the same object by selling to them. Along that path lies ultimately the cessation of international trade and the bankruptcy of the world.

" The cessation of international trade and the bankruptcy of the world "—this is a perfectly correct logical conclusion of the present line of capitalist policy. But the only remedy the *Economist* can propound is to retreat back to the conditions of free trade capitalism, in place of recognising that it is just the conditions of free trade capitalism that have inevitably given rise to monopolist capitalism and its intensified warfare, and that all the preachings of a hundred Economic Committees and International Economic Conferences for many years now have proved impotent to deflect for a moment this ever-intensifying warfare of monopolist capitalism.

THIS situation is intensified (but not caused) by the ever-growing volume of debt obligations of the mass of capitalist states to the ever-narrowing circle of creditor imperialist Powers. The present position of Germany is only the extreme and most conspicuous example of a whole series of countries. In Germany the recent survey by the Brüning Government following on the July emergency decree showed

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that the total foreign indebtedness amounted to no less than £1,400 millions, or half as much again as the Basel Committee had estimated. The interest and other charges on this would amount to anything in the neighbourhood of £100 millions a year, requiring thus a surplus of exports of £100 millions a year, entirely apart from and additional to any payments of reparations. In 1930, by the most extreme restriction of imports and pressure of exports, an export surplus of £50 millions had been achieved. This year the figure is nominally higher, but mainly on the basis of the collapse of imports of raw materials, reflecting the collapse of industry. It is clear that there is here, not only full ground for the conflict between the reparations demands of France and the commercial debts demands of Britian and America, but that, apart from any such conflict, as soon as any payments are attempted to be made at all, and the temporary standstill and moratorium arrangements come to an end, a still more intensified exports offensive must follow, with an accompanying intensified social offensive and social conflicts within Germany.

A SIMILAR situation is revealed in the recent League of Nations Financial Committee report on Hungary, the subsidised counter-revolutionary puppet state of the Western Powers. The total foreign debt was found to have "increased in the past six years at a rate which in our opinion the real need of the country did not warrant" (who lent the money?), reaching a sum of 4,094 million pengö, or about £140 millions, and requiring an annual service of 300 million pengö, or over £10 millions. But the trade of Hungary in 1928 showed an adverse balance of 370 million pengö; by 1930 this had, by the most extreme measures, been forced to a surplus of 61 millions, or only one-fifth of the charge of the debt. What, then, could the wiseacres of the League of Nations Financial Committee, or bankers' brokers, recommend? Nothing but a temporary standstill of six months, and then still more intense restriction of imports and forcing of exports. But, as it has been pointed out, this would mean, for full payment, either the cutting down of

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imports to one-fifth of the 1927-9 volume, or the corresponding increase of exports; and at the same time more than half the trade of Hungary is with Austria, Czecho-Slovakia and Germany, all of which are faced with the same necessity of reducing imports and increasing exports.

IT is clear that we are faced here with the outcome of the whole post-war process of the capitalist Restoration of Europe. The proletarian revolution, which could have alone solved the economic situation of these countries, was artificially held back by the Western Powers and America throughout Central and South-Eastern Europe by the combined force of arms and finance. Money was poured recklessly into the corrupt counter-revolutionary puppet states, with little care of guarantee so long as they held back the revolution. This was proclaimed the Restoration and Stabilisation of Europe. But at the end comes the reckoning. The loans pile up until the total becomes too great to cover by the easy process of fresh loans. The payment of interest and charges has to begin, wrung from the peoples against whom these same loans have been originally created. But payment can only be made by surplus of exports or by gold. The creditor imperialist powers want no flood of cheap imports, and bar their doors. The flow of gold runs in one direction to the present colossal disproportion, until this too dries up. The real problem, the real breakdown of the stabilisation, is laid bare in all its sharpness.

IT is obvious that the maldistribution of gold, which a thousand experts, including Labour experts, endeavour to define as the cause of the crisis, is no more than a symptom and consequence of the process and contradictions at work. The piling up of three-quarters of the world's gold, they argue, in France and America, is the cause of the crisis, of the headlong fall in prices (this is to leave out of account the consequences of rationalisation and increased productive power), of the crushing burden of debt charges, of the blockage of international payments, of the breakdown of the working

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of the gold standard. What, then, is their remedy? The more fantastic school argue to some new imaginary standard divorced from gold. With this we have dealt in last month's issue. The more sober school demand that gold must be more equally distributed, in the interests of creditors and debtors alike. But how? Capitalism is not a parlour game of beggar-my-neighbour, with a redistribution of the chips, after the round is over. The gold can only travel from the creditors in the form of new loans. So the Macmillan Report declares:

> The desirability of foreign loans being made by the leading creditor countries on a greater scale than in the past two years should be generally accepted. (p. 135.)

But here comes the difficulty:

> The most difficult task is likely to be to find borrowers of sufficient standing to give confidence to investors.
>
> The greatest difficulty is . . . to remedy the shortage of definitely sound borrowers for the purpose of new enterprise. The vicious circle is complete. The decline of new enterprise has reacted adversely on profits and prices, and the low level of profits and prices stands in the way of new enterprise.

But with this the theory of gold maldistribution as the cause of the crisis falls to the ground. It is the economic crisis, the lack of prospect of profitable investment, that checks the flow of gold, and not vice versa. In fact, the system of fresh loans by the creditor countries, with the consequent streaming back of the gold to the European debtor countries, was the basis of the Capitalist Restoration of 1924-7. Its only outcome is the present impasse, as soon as the stream of loans has ceased to flow and no longer covers the necessary payments by new loans. To attempt again to tide over the crisis by new loans is only to increase the magnitude of the ultimate repayment; and this time the investors very naturally hold back from plunging to a new future "standstill" and probable loss.

IN the face of this, the capitalist governments are compelled to approach the thorny problem of the debts and reparations payments; since it is obvious that only by a general scaling down can the position even be slightly eased (without even so touching the real causes of the crisis, which lie rooted

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in the primary contradiction of capitalist social production and individual appropriation, even if there were no inter-governmental debts and reparations questions to aggravate the crisis). Capitalism is faced with the necessity of foregoing a portion of its tribute claims, to save the remainder. But this raises at once the intense antagonism of the different creditor powers, as to who shall bear the loss. The enforced temporary moratorium holds the ring, while this fight now develops as to what shall be the position at its close. America, France and Britain are the protagonists in this conflict. The question of the possible general revision of debts and reparations, which now comes on to the order of the day, so far from revealing a united progressive tendency of international capitalism to solve its problems, reveals a new intensification of imperialist antagonisms.

ON the one side, the running fight develops between British and French expression as to the priority of German reparations or commercial debts. Here a direct opposition is revealed. At the same time, Britain looked hopefully to America for support against the French thesis, on the basis of common interests in the commercial debts. But the frozen credits in Germany have hit British capitalism very much harder than American; and America has so far shown itself more concerned to utilise this advantage against Britain than to press its claims against France. This was already shown at the London Conference in July, which British policy had hoped to develop into the beginning of an international revision movement, but which broke down, in the face of combined American and French opposition, into a bare marking of time without further decision. Again, great expectations were built on the Hoover-Laval meeting as likely to mark a new departure in American policy towards general revision and possible calling of an international conference. No such outcome resulted, to the open disappointment of the British press. On the contrary, America and France proclaimed their unity on the basis of the gold standard, that is, against Britain; their agreement to differ on other

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questions, without further commitment on either side; while Germany was virtually instructed to make what terms it could with France. It is thus clear that the opportunity of pressure on British capitalism in crisis is being used to the utmost; France, with American connivance, is taking advantage of the situation to strengthen its hold throughout Europe; America is more concerned at the moment to weight the scales against Britain than to take a direct lead in Europe; the prospects of the British policy of any wide revision and cancellation are still remote. This situation may only change if a point develops at which American Imperialism may find it necessary to work to check the growth of French power (the French offensive against the dollar just before the Hoover-Laval conversations was already a warning of this fight between the two final gold-powers).

THE intensity of the crisis may yet compel some measure of concerted capitalist action to endeavour to ease the strain, whether by scaling down of debts and reparations, combined credits or other means. But this is by no means the only possibility. It is significant that, whereas in the field of any attempts at economic re-adjustment the antagonisms of the imperialist powers remain open and extreme, the signs of an approach to common ground between the imperialist powers show themselves in a very different direction. That direction is expressed at the present point in Manchuria. What is most conspicuous, and the most serious danger-signal, in the present war of intervention in Manchuria, and especially its northerly extension, is the wide measure of unity of the imperialist forces in its support. At any previous period the open Japanese bandit offensive in Manchuria might have been expected to set all the other Powers on the alarm for their own interests. To-day, on the contrary, we see the practical acquiescence of the other Powers, including also America, under the thinnest cover of dilatory protest and enquiry-making at Geneva and Paris, that deceives none; and not only that, but the nearest approach to common diplomatic working of America and the League

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in a single body takes place since 1919, with even American participation in the Council. That is to say, the approach to a united front of imperialism under pressure of the crisis takes place in one direction, and in one direction only—the direction of war, and of war against the Soviet Union.

IT should never be forgotten that the path of capitalism in endeavouring to find a way out from the crisis is less likely to follow a pacific line, and most likely to follow a warlike line. Did not Beaverbrook recently declare that the only solution for the crisis was a large-scale war? This tendency is intensified by the peculiar character of the present situation of the extreme decline of capitalism taking place alongside the accelerating advance of socialism in the workers' republic, with at the same time the sharpening social conflicts within each capitalist country. The war in Manchuria, and the unity behind the military occupation of Manchuria, is already the direct step, not only for the strangling of the Chinese Revolution, but also to open provocation to war on the Soviet Union; it is not only the preparation of an armed base for impending conflict, but may be intended immediately to force the issue. The clouds hang heavy over every capitalist country. At the same time dictatorships of the right are now established in every leading capitalist country. With the National Government in Britain, with Hoover in America, with Laval in France and Brüning in Germany, with revolutionary struggles threatening in Germany and Central Europe; with economic problems proving insoluble, the moment may be judged ripe to strike, at once against the workers' struggle and for the further extension of fascist rule in Europe, and for the supreme world conflict against the workers' republic. It is just this situation that makes so urgent the readiness for action of the working class movement in every country, and so critical the present uncertain and still transitional stage of the working class movement in Britain.

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THE National Government can only be viewed, not merely as a particular internal political combination in Britain, but as a major factor in this world situation, in the world crisis, in the intensified economic conflict, and in the drive to war. The National Government is a government of British capitalism at war for its life, both against the workers at home, and in the world sphere. Its measures, and its emergency forms of procedure, bear the war stamp. Its tariff policy is a war policy. For the moment, it has, through the elections, endeavoured to throw a democratic cover around its dictatorship, and to conceal its actual character of a concentration bloc of the ruling class. The Labour Party, by its paralysis and disorganisation of the workers' front, has assisted this process at the elections, and now stands ready to assist further with offers of " every aid " in carrying out the government's plans (*Daily Herald*, October 30, 1931). But as the struggle develops, this parliamentary-democratic cover, which the very exaggeration of the election results has already heavily discredited, will inevitably be ever more completely exposed, and the real class fronts stand out. To hasten the process of the mobilisation of the widest workers' front for struggle is now the urgent task.

THE elections sounded the signal for the necessity of a new stage in the working class movement in Britain. Disillusionment with the Labour Party has reached the proportion of affecting millions of workers. The lesson of the by-elections for the past two years has been carried forward to the general election. The Labour Party begins for the first time since its post-war expansion to go downwards. It is significant that the only previous parallel to this process was in the second election of 1910, when there was a marked drop in the vote. That was on the eve of the great rising wave of working class struggle which preceded the war. The decline of the Labour Party coincides with the rise of the workers' struggle. To-day the whole scale is immeasurably greater. The Labour Party in its ascent reached eight millions; it has passed through two governments; the

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beginning of its decline opens the way to a political transformation. There will be swings in this process; but the hold has weakened; the great change begins.

FOR the moment, until the new forces are stronger, the immediate profit of the situation goes to conservatism. This is a warning of the dangers of the position if the new forces are slow to advance; but it is not yet an evidence, as the capitalist journalists hasten to assert, that the workers have swung to the right. On the contrary, the rising wave of the working class struggle both before, during, and after the elections is obvious to all. There has been no sign at any point of mass enthusiasm for the National Government, such as attended formerly the rise of the Labour Party; the enthusiasm for the "great election victory" has been confined to the bourgeoisie. In other words, the significance of the vote is above all, not a vote of confidence in the National Government, but a vote of anger and disgust against the Labour Party and its ignominious record, alike as government and as opposition. With far more discernment than the London press, with its short-lived pæans of joy, the New York *Times* diagnosed the election vote as a vote of "discontent"; twice the Labour Party had already come to power on the basis of this discontent; "this time discontent operated against a government of the discontented," *i.e.*, against the Labour Party. The revolutionary significance of this process is obvious, even though it presents the most urgent problems to the working class vanguard. The fact that the Communist vote, despite the extreme smallness of the scale owing to the still early stage of the party's growth (in respect of the smallness, it is important to note that the fascist New Party, despite enormous finance and press publicity, was only able with an equal number of candidates to secure half the Communist vote), nevertheless increased in the midst of the universal Labour decline, is sufficient evidence that we are here faced, not with a general working class slump, but with a Labour Party slump. To draw the moral from this, to act on this situation, and clear the way forward, is now the urgent task.



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WHAT is now the path forward for the millions of workers who have lost faith in the Labour Party? What is the line for organising the struggle against the National Government? This is now the urgent question which needs to be discussed throughout the working class. The Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party will make every effort to restore the old position, to draw the workers back to the old banners. This path means retreat and decline. The Labour Party is, in fact, under the pressure of the election defeat and of the National preponderance, moving to the right; is seeking union with the Liberal remnant, is stressing the necessity of winning the middle class, is proposing to revise its programme in more "practical" forms. The Independent Labour Party, while in its propaganda professing to voice the left aspirations of the workers, is in fact in its official policy moving equally to the right, to the re-establishment of full unity with the Labour Party, to propaganda of renewed hopes in the Labour Party as now "purged" of its former leaders and an instrument of socialism. At the same time the revolt within the Independent Labour Party grows. The scale of the issues, the growing intensity of the crisis and struggle forces differentiation. The rapid accession of thousands of workers to the Communist Party is a signpost. While the Labour Party, with the Independent Labour Party still at its tail, seeks to consolidate itself on the right, the workers' army must form its ranks independently for the struggle, on the basis of the local united front, on the basis of the factories, around the leadership of the Communist Party, for the new stage of the working class movement. The host of questions raised by this situation, to which it will be necessary to return next month, require now to be in the forefront of discussion.

R. P. D.

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# BRITISH WORKERS AND THE WAR IN MANCHURIA

## *By* GEORGE HARDY

WITH the advance of the Japanese forces in Manchuria the strength of the revolutionary working class movement is put to the acid test. Yet how many millions of workers really know Manchuria other than in name. " Manchuria " is suddenly thrust upon them, with the exception of those who read the workers' press, as they ride to and from work while glancing over the lying capitalist press or reading their Sunday paper.

Literally this is an unfortunate fact that serves to emphasise the insularity and consequent apathy and neglect that characterises our attitude to international problems affecting the working class.

The invasion and seizure of all strategic centres in Manchuria by the Japanese imperialist bandits are not events precipitated by external forces alien to Japan and other imperialist powers as the lying press would have the working class believe : they are but aspects of one definite, well-defined and traditional imperialist policy which is constantly reiterated and emphasised a thousand times by each successive minister at the Japanese Foreign Office. As we shall see even the massacre of the defenceless masses of Manchuria was cruelly and openly spoken of as a necessary prelude to annexation of Manchuria by Japan.

The political and economic importance of Manchuria is emphasised by the following :

(1) Manchuria embraces territory comprising three provinces of China four times larger than Great Britain and borders approximately 2,000 miles of the Soviet territory ; (2) beyond its frontier on the West lies undeveloped Inner and Outer Mongolia, comprising 1,370,000 square miles in the heart of Asia, with a population variously estimated of probably no more than 2,500,000, outer Mongolia forming a unit of the free Soviet Republics ; (3) it is a rich agricultural country with abundance of mineral wealth ; and (4) it is a centre of intrigue and war against the Socialist Fatherland, constantly practised by the conspiring imperialist powers who harbour and finance White-Guardist Russians to menace Soviet citizens, with their communications, and trade in the Far East, and to make war upon the Soviet Union.

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Herein lies the fundamental reasons for the seizure of Manchuria by the imperialists and as a step to their ultimate objectives: (1) the annexation of Manchuria; (2) the partitioning of China by the imperialist powers; and (3) military intervention against the U.S.S.R. And these are not items isolated from the attacks upon the masses of workers and small farmers in the imperialist countries and the British Dominions—they are of one and the same capitalist offensive attempting to overcome the deepening crisis at the expense of the workers and peasants.

The imperialist powers are engaged in a life and death struggle to prolong capitalism. Increased power of production through rationalisation, a contracting market brought about by a reduction of the purchasing power of the hungry and ill-clad workers of the imperialist countries, and the impoverished and famine-stricken victims in the colonies, with its consequent intensification of the struggle between the imperialist powers followed by a rapid fall in prices, increasing millions of unemployed, extending the militancy of the masses expressed in strikes, mass demonstrations, &c., followed by revolts in the armed forces (mutinies in the British, Australian and Chilian navies, &c.) are all factors forcing the imperialists of all countries to find a common basis of attack. Since parasitic imperialism can only be prolonged at the expense of the international working class and by deepening the exploitation of the colonial peoples, it naturally follows that the imperialists adopt a policy of ceaseless attacks upon the only State power in the hands of the workers and peasants.

Declining trade with adverse balances, budget deficits and a fall in revenue express decaying capitalism in imperialist countries. But Japan, as the last big power to enter the ranks of imperialist plunderers, notwithstanding the fact that this gave her some great advantages, commenced her ambitious career at not a little disadvantage. Being hampered by imperialist predecessors the Japanese imperialists have always cited pressure of population as an excuse for their banditry. This of course helps to intensify the crisis for the Japanese imperialists. But capitalism always will subordinate an expanding population to profits and plunder; there can be no solution for the "pressure of population" in a period of capitalist decline.

A superficial glance at Japanese history reveals the traditional policy that explains the seizure of Manchuria. While hypocritically professing peaceful intentions, the peace terms imposed upon China at the close of the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 forced China to cede "independence" to Korea and relinquish Formosa, after which Korean nationalism was drowned many times in the blood-baths administered by Japan and forcibly annexed. They now follow this hypocritical line in 1931 to deceive the masses in Japan and China as well as the imperialist workers

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at home by " proclaiming " an independent Manchuria by suggesting its separation from China as a first step towards establishing a full colony of Japan.

Korea was used as Japan's first jumping off ground, just as British imperialists utilised Kong Hong for their imperialist penetration. The defeat of the Czarist forces in the Russo-Japanese war that was hastened by the rebellious Russian masses in 1905, who replied to appeals for " greater sacrifices " with mass demonstrations, general strikes and armed struggle, enabled Japan to replace the Russian imperialists in South Manchuria.

The Japanese immediately set to work to reconstruct the South Manchurian Railway, consolidating and extending their base of operations. They took the Liaotung Peninsular, known to-day as the Kwantung Leased Territory which they forced China to cede to them for 99 years. It is now heavily fortified and used as a base to protect the operations of the Japanese imperialists against any approach from the Yellow Sea.

At Ryojun exists the so-called civil Administrative Government, whose chief tasks are set out as : (1) to administer the Leased Territory ; (2) to police the South Manchurian Railway (S.M.R.) ; (3) to execute imperial edicts according to instructions and (4) to supervise the business of the S.M.R. The S.M.R. is the spearhead by which the Japanese imperialists have extended their colonising ambitions northward and westward, and will replace Korea as a jumping-off ground if and when Japan's annexationist ambitions are fully satisfied.

Even the President and Vice-President of the S.M.R. hold their posts by Imperial sanction. The Japanese Government, owning 50 per cent. of the 440 million yen capital, appoints the directorate from among the dominant and privileged shareholders. Until recently it was the rule of appointees to " resign " from important political offices and affiliations, but after the appointment of Yamamoto of the Seiyukai (Conservative Party) a few years ago, he denounced this procedure as inconsistent with his views. This pretence of neutrality no longer served the interests of the Japanese imperialists for everyone knows that the post of President of the S.M.R. is equal to any high political administrative post in the Government, and that the political rôle and influence of the S.M.R. officially extends far beyond the railway zone and railway administration.

As a field for widening Japanese imperialist exploitation Manchuria offers lucrative inducements. Covering 363,700 square miles with a population limited to 23,000,000 or about 60 persons per square mile, out of 64,500,000 acres of arable land only half is cultivated. The crops are varied : corn, millet, kaoliang, barley, wheat, rice, sugar beets, peanuts, cotton, tobacco, are all grown in Manchuria while the soya bean

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constitutes the basic agricultural product from which is extracted oil, glycerine, varnishes, enamels, rubber substitutes, &c., Materials for manufacturing explosives are also important bye-products taken from the soya bean.

The rich steam coal deposits at Fushun, 20 miles east of Mukden, are estimated at a million tons in the largest open or strip coal mine in the world. The Japanese have also grabbed the iron ore deposits at Anshan, estimated at 300 million tons, which they hold by a Treaty forced out of China in 1915, when the Japanese imperialists subjected China to the now infamous 21 points. This is most important in the imperialist war preparations, for within Japan no iron ores exist and very little coal. But these by no means exhaust the wealth forcibly extracted from China: the S.M.R. owns real estate amounting to 112.5 square miles. It has leased 11,000 acres of arable land and 2,512 acres of residential properties, while the railway towns under Japanese control comprise 26 square miles with 17,000 buildings in its possession. These imperialist robbers have established their own postal and telegraph services and subordinate South Manchuria to its policy by bribery, physical coercion and murder. They have not even restrained from murdering their own "puppet rulers" when it suited their political purposes as they did Chang Tso-lin in 1928.

Out of 38,648 officials operating this spearhead of Japanese imperialism, 22,322 are Japanese. The process of colonisation in Manchuria does not stop with the S.M.R. and subordinate industries, &c. Japan, to carry out her well-defined objective, periodically returns to subjugate China still further. This has resulted in "agreements" giving Japan sole control over railways with no rights whatsoever left to the Chinese to build railways that in any way can be construed as menacing the profits of the S.M.R. which is synonymous with Japanese imperialism. These railways are not only feeders to the S.M.R. but are strategically planned for military purposes as well as commercial use against the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Soviet Union.

This "positive policy" as the Japanese die-hards are pleased to call it, carries with it not only the sole monopoly of Japan with its 700 odd miles of railways but the colonisation, annexation and complete subjugation of the whole of North China from the Yellow River, including Shantung and Inner Mongolia, for Japan has never given up the idea of complete subjection of Shantung since she was forced by the Washington Conference decisions to withdraw. This was seen by the massacre of 500 Chinese at Tsinan in 1928. This is why military actions are taking place from Tsitsihar in the North-west, Kirin in the East, as far as Tientsin in the South, as well as along the Peking-Mukden railway, where the paid bandits of Japan have committed provocative acts to

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" justify " the presence of Japanese forces who, co-operating with the Kuomingtang forces, are slaughtering the rebellious Chinese who dare to protest against this preparation for the partitioning of China.

That Japan regards Manchuria as a permanent colony and is prepared for war on a much wider scale is contained in a significant statement made by the Foreign Minister in the Fiftieth Session of the Japanese Diet. He declared :

> We are interested in the whole of China to the extent and in a degree absolutely essential to our national existence. But more particularly keen are our national sentiments over Manchuria and Mongolia because of historic reasons in addition to these general considerations, I refer to the fact that Japan, in self-defence and in the interests of peace in the Far East, staked the country's fortunes on two great wars in the Manchurian plains. By such supreme efforts, we are enabled actively to engage in peaceful undertakings in that region.

Here we have the official and murderous policy, and as always, camouflaged, of course, with phrases about " self-defence " and " peace," which is the characteristic method of all imperialist robbers whenever they are preparing or are engaged in wars even upon the workers or an almost defenceless people. We also see Japan's perspective in an even wider aspect than the annexation of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. For they prepare war upon the U.S.S.R. by simultaneously attempting with lying statements about " Russian aid " for Chinese generals to hide their own butchery and murderous attacks.

But what of the other imperialist plunderers who all have their claws tearing at the lean frames of the Chinese workers and peasants ? It is as clear as daylight from dark that the " notes " of Briand sent from the Council of the League of Nations to Japan are to prepare extended warfare. In this Britain already gives the assurance not to commit any act to interfere with Japan, while the French imperialists scarcely hide their glee and concurrence with the murderous policy of the imperialist assassins. America's policy of staking all on the Kuomintang butchers of Nanking in order to subjugate China to the financial and industrial power of U.S.A. has left them with a broken reed compared with the club they expected in Chiang Kai-shek, T. V. Soong and Co. This is because the U.S.A. and imperialist powers aim to partition China.

British and Japanese imperialists, united against the U.S.A., have succeeded in splitting the " Central " Government at Nanking and the founding of another at Canton. This is seen in the recent visits of Eugene Chen, the Canton Foreign Minister to Japan and Hong Kong. This must make the U.S. imperialists temporarily more amenable to a common policy of retarding the deepening economic crisis that is engulfing every imperialist nation. We see them all united against the

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Red Army of the Chinese Soviets and the struggling workers and peasants. The Chinese workers and peasants co-operating with the Chinese Red Armies, however, have been a great factor in engaging the forces of both the Kuomintang forces and all the imperialist powers and have considerably weakened the Nanking Government and hastened its disintegration both politically and militarily. Every Kuomintang clique of human butchers are allied to one or more of the imperialist powers, operating, whether they be in Canton, Nanking, Shanghai, Tientsin or Mukden, as hired gunmen and assassins of imperialism in attempting to suppress, by torture, disembowelling or decapitation those Chinese who protest against the robbery and partition of China by the imperialist powers for which the Kuomintang imperialist allies have fully prepared. This is amply borne out by the arrest and execution, at the instructions of Japan, of those Chinese who continued the Japanese boycott and fought the Kuomintang policy of submission to imperialism.

Contrast this line of oppressive colonisation with the Treaty the Soviet Union signed with China restoring her sovereignty and complete independence as far as Soviet Russia was concerned. Here, true to the policy of independence for the oppressed colonial and semi-colonial peoples, under the guidance of Comrade Lenin, the U.S.S.R. relinquished all territorial and political " rights " exacted by the Czarist regime, and maintained by every imperialist power to oppress the Chinese. They gave over the Boxer Indemnity for educational purposes to China, and even agreed to a fifty-fifty control with the Chinese of the Russian railway, the Chinese Eastern Railway, relinquishing such a vital line of communication completely to China after a specified period. It had previously been used by the Japanese and an Inter-allied Commission for intervention in Siberia against the Bolshevik revolutionary forces.

War against the Soviet districts in China, on the Soviet Union, is not something separate and distinct from the partition of China and the oppression of other colonial and semi-colonial peoples. It is part of the same policy, just the same as the capitalist offensive of wage-cutting, reduction of the dole, the means test, raising prices by inflation and tariff measures, non-payment of overtime, speeding-up and attending more machines, &c., reducing the living standards and hence the reduction of the vitality of the workers, carried out in all imperialist countries. They are all simultaneously part of the preparations for war upon both the colonial and Chinese peoples and the workers' and peasants' Fatherland.

In this imperialist offensive against the Soviet Union, for the partition of China and the lowering of the living standards of all workers and peasants the Social Fascist trade union bureaucracy and Social-Democracy, as expressed in the British Labour Party, is supported by the so-called

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Lefts of the I.L.P. Thus we see the *Daily Herald*, official organ of the Labour Party, in a report from their " own correspondent," stating that " the Chinese General Ma is strengthened by a Russian brigade," and this after a categorical denial by the Soviet Foreign Minister.

The rôle of the I.L.P. is even more treacherous. *Forward* states on November 14: " No clear statements come " about Russia. " Tell us who is financing and supplying munitions to the Chinese generals and tell us what the Japanese invaders are after." The I.L.P. clearly lines up with the imperialists and their *Daily Herald* correspondent. They do more—it is a trick of the " Lefts " to sow confusion—by putting the Chinese and Japanese equally before the masses, inferring that they do not understand the rôle of Japan in Manchuria, while inferring that Chinese get their munitions from the U.S.S.R.

The trade union officials, in direct agreement with the employers, intensify their splitting tactics as exemplified by the recent expulsions from the Amalgamated Engineering Union, both in London and Sheffield. This constitutes an attempt to arrest the capitalist crisis and decline, prolong capitalist exploitation and assist the National Government to stabilise starvation in every working class home. Their hope is to prolong their own parasitical position on the backs of the workers at home by having employers exercise force to maintain them in their positions in return for services rendered to save capitalism. They constitute a part of the apparatus of imperialism.

Their rôle, therefore, is naturally to deepen the exploitation of the colonial peoples and each and everyone falls naturally into his position of supporting the butchers of the Chinese workers and peasants, the partitioning of China and the bandit actions of Japan in the process of annexation of Manchuria as first step towards tearing China limb from limb, agreed to by all the imperialist powers. This is why we have not even heard a word of protest uttered from even the otherwise noisy " Left " I.L.P.'ers, who act now more than ever as a bulwark shielding the attacks of the National Government, prepared by the Labour Party.

In this treacherous work these imperialist watch-dogs are supported in the colonies by their equally submissive colleagues who ape their imperialist " brothers." These national reformists appeal to the workers of India and China to refrain from revolutionary activity and subordinate themselves to national interests. At the same time they savagely behead every effort calculated to enhance the cause of complete independence. Their " nationalism " is also a gesture to hide their tactics of deepening colonial exploitation and consolidating imperialist interests synonymous with the increasing millions of famine victims.

The acid test of the revolutionary organisations is before them in the urgent call for action. The masses must all be made to understand

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the seizure of Manchuria in its fullest meaning. Don't let us underestimate the readiness of the masses to grasp its significance, notwithstanding the deepening antagonisms and endless contradictions that will arise to threaten whatever agreement the imperialists may achieve for tactical reasons. Manchuria, the colonisation of China, war on the Soviet Union, the potentiality of imperialist conflicts arising, all must be connected with the general offensive of the capitalist class in all countries. The fight against military intervention against the U.S.S.R. is a pressing and immediate and central task for every worker. To-morrow may find the Japanese imperialist armies astride of the Soviet communication at Anganchei on the Chinese Eastern Railway and in possession of Tsitsihar. This will be tantamount to an open declaration of war upon the Socialist Fatherland. It may only be a matter of days or even hours before the " allied armies " will be in possession of the C.E.R., cutting off Vladivostok from direct communication with Moscow, thus threatening the Far Eastern Soviet Socialist Republic that would have to be fully supported by the U.S.S.R.

We must take this struggle to the factories, the mines, mills, docks, railways, ships and the Labour Exchanges. Delay may be disastrous. Step by step the Japanese imperialists have encroached upon China. Every statement has been carefully formulated in accordance with their traditional policy, even insisting that Manchuria is an " independent " State, which they now proceed to create *as they did in Korea.*

The central enemy is not in some far distant country—the enemy is in our midst. The Japanese is the open aggressor, but the British as well as other imperialists are as active as Japan in these war actions. Don't allow the I.L.P. to render aid to the British imperialists by sowing confusion behind queries and left-phrases. Stop the offensive of the Labour Party and the T.U. bureaucrats on behalf of imperialist war preparations by fighting against the economy measures prepared by the Labour Party and their Government before they left office. Then we shall be really rendering aid to the Chinese and Japanese workers and peasants and preparing for mass action and militant tactics to defeat the war of intervention against the U.S.S.R.

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# LEFT SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

## I.—The Opposition in the I.L.P.

### *By* WILLIAM RUST

[*The discussions of the issues raised by R.P.D. in the Notes of the Month on "Left-Wing Socialism and Communism" in the April number of the* LABOUR MONTHLY *is here continued. Previous contributions have occurred in the issues for May, July, September and November, as well as certain aspects further dealt with by R.P.D. in his Notes in the issues for July, September, October and November. Readers are invited to give expression to their views on the subject.*]

THE defeat of the Labour Party in the General Election has come as a great shock to millions of Labour Party workers who have witnessed the collapse of cherished illusions, above all the idea that there must be a rising curve of Labour votes signifying a gradual and peaceful advance towards the day when capitalism would be vanquished and Socialism inaugurated by a Parliamentary majority.

The outlook inculcated by thirty years of Labour Party propaganda is rapidly changing and millions of workers are beginning to look towards new methods of struggle against the capitalist enemy. No one realises this more than the Labour leaders themselves. They have sensed the change and fear it. A most significant summing up of the meaning of the General Election result came from Henderson, the defeated leader of the Labour Party, who declared :

> The new House of Commons will be a mockery of democratic Parliamentary representation and from the standpoint of general national interest this is a danger and a disaster. Experience has shown that the absence of an adequate and effective official Opposition undermines faith in Parliamentary institutions.

Clynes, the second in command, followed on with the warning that :

> The destruction for the time being of the Parliamentary Labour Party may well release forces for dissatisfaction, which may assume the most ugly forms in the absence of political power which the Labour Party has wielded.

The working class is at the parting of the ways. The historical warning of Frederick Engels' "Starve or Rebel," has become a grim reality. Decaying capitalism is dragging the Labour Party down with it and masses are turning away from the Party which has betrayed them.

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But the decay of the Labour Party is not automatic and mechanical. Losing support amongst the working class the leadership strives to maintain the Party by a closer fusion with the capitalist state machine, increased co-operation with the open bourgeois parties and by attempting to obtain a broader basis amongst the petty bourgeois strata of the population. The new moves of the Labour Party to the right were made very clear in a *Daily Herald* editorial commenting on a speech by Herbert Morrison, asking for a review of Labour Party policy " in the light of modern economic and financial problems." The *Daily Herald* explained that the petty bourgeoisie need not be afraid of Socialism which is only another word for planned capitalism :

> There is a deep misconception among millions of people of the real purpose and intention of Socialism. . . . It is a common sense plan for the rationalisation of the system in which we live : for the conscious planning of society : for the substitution of order for chaos and semi-chaos. (November 3.)

The Labour Party does not, however, play only on this string. At the same time as it moves more quickly than ever along the Social-Fascist path it also brings its " left " string into play and advances its component part, the Independent Labour Party, into greater prominence, especially in order to influence the workers. The Election results have raised sharply to the forefront the whole question of the relation between the Labour Party and the I.L.P. and make the rôle of the I.L.P. an issue of decisive importance to the working class.

Long before the General Election the leaders of the I.L.P. had been cautiously feeling their way for a breaking off of the organisational connection with the Labour Party and on some issues they plunged into the luxury of opposition to Labour Party decisions although they never went farther than Parliamentary fireworks. Their attack on the Anomalies Act, for example, never developed into the organisation of mass action throughout the country. After the collapse of the Government the situation changed a little, differences with the Labour Party were pushed into the background and the General Council of the T.U.C. was lauded to the skies. Then, with the tremendous upsurge of the mass movement which revealed the growth of a revolutionary spirit amongst the masses, the I.L.P. leaders stretched out towards the Communist Party and spoke brazenly about a united front and even a " common organisation."

The value of this talk was speedily tested when Maxton & Co. point blank refused to accept the Communist Party's proposals for the organisation of mass action in support of the Invergordon mutiny and for the demands of " Not a Penny off." After this daring excursion to the left, the I.L.P. bounced over to the right again, made a solemn bow before the Labour Party's General Election programme and declared that :

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> The magnificent workers of the Labour Party will enter on such a contest with redoubled vigour and determination, responding to the clearest class attack to which they have been subjected. The issue of the new Election Programme gives them a lead to which they can respond with unprecedented ardour and which should provide the rallying ground for the whole of the working class. (October 2.)

But although the *New Leader* was so inspired the bourgeois press could not refrain from laughing at this " Socialism."

> Lip-service is paid in the first sentence to Socialism as the " real solution," but there is no need to boggle overmuch at that. He would be a rash man who would proclaim capitalism as the " real solution " and most of us will prefer to suspend condemnation until we know precisely what " Socialism " means. (*Manchester Guardian*, Sept. 30.)

> The trade unions regard the programme as thoroughly unconvincing, and in any case do not believe that the leaders, judging by the " weakness " of the past two years, would carry it out. In its heart the T.U.C. does not really want a revolutionary policy ; all it wants is a programme that will sound revolutionary. (*Observer*, October 4.)

After this declaration of loyalty to the Labour Party, the Opposition of the I.L.P. at the Scarborough Conference to the new Standing Orders was obviously a mere manœuvre. The I.L.P. which was in agreement with the policy of the Labour Party claimed the right to vote against particular decisions in Parliament. The Labour Party chiefs would not agree and so the I.L.P. leaders whooped up this organisational difference and patted themselves on the back as brave fellows who would not bend the knee to dictatorial methods. This opposition was, in fact, just what the leaders of the Labour Party wanted. If they had been intent on a closer control of the I.L.P. they would have conceded this " conscience clause " (allowed in the Tory and Liberal parties) and not forced the bringing about of a separate I.L.P. group in the House with claims on the Front Bench.

In the General Election the I.L.P. fought for the policy of the Labour Party, but, for the first time, its candidates did not receive official endorsement, although they were not opposed by Labour candidates, except in two cases (Shettleston and Peckham), where the intervention was based on local circumstances. After the Election the I.L.P. manœuvred for a new position. Politically, it again surrendered to the Labour Party, organisationally it was forced into a position of greater independence. After a period of uncertainty, the National Administrative Council decided to cancel the special Party Conference called for November, recommended that a decision on the question of disaffiliation to the Labour Party should be postponed until the annual conference at Easter and issued a statement suggesting that with Snowden and MacDonald out of the Labour Party the policy might be revised to the left.

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The terms of this remarkable facing both ways statement are as follows :

> The future policy of the Labour Party is undecided. Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Snowden, who were largely responsible for the futile policy of the last Labour Government, have left the Party. Although their colleagues went far in the policy of compromise, there have been indications since the fall of the Labour Government of a departure from the policy of patching up capitalism. On the other hand there have been indications of a disquieting tendency, and it is too early to say in which direction the Labour Movement will react to its electoral defeat.
>
> This issue of policy is even more fundamental than that of Standing Orders. Policy will be the dominating factor in determining whether the I.L.P. will remain affiliated to the Labour Party or not. (I.L.P. Council's Declaration Point VIII., *New Leader*, November 13, 1931.)

The whole of this abject declaration was a cowardly surrender to the Labour Party, was a further move along the road of social-fascism, together with the Labour Party. The cheap trickery is very thin. Henderson and Graham are white-washed at the expense of MacDonald and Snowden. Hopes of a " Left " Labour Party are held out although all the leaders are proclaiming that the Labour Party was defeated because it was too " left " ! Finally, comes the typical hypocritical qualification, useful for answering all objections—" On the other hand . . . disquieting tendencies . . . too early to say . . ." The special conference has been called off because it would have inevitably stimulated political discussion in the branches and hastened the differentiation now taking place. The cancellation is intended to damp down the rising opposition amongst the rank and file of the I.L.P.

The growing organisational separation from the Labour Party, it should be noted, is not of the I.L.P. seeking. The aforementioned declaration is at pains to make this clear.

> Five unendorsed candidates were returned. They have not been invited to the meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party and have not been sent the Party whips. They must consequently be regarded in the House of Commons as an independent party and have been recognised as such by the Speaker. If this situation remains unchanged the maintenance of I.L.P. affiliation to the Labour Party will be difficult.

Whatever the Independent Labour Party may be, it is certainly not independent of the Labour Party.

This brief recital of the relations between the I.L.P. and the Labour Party during the last three months may be summed up as signifying :

1. Complete agreement between the leaders of the I.L.P. and Labour Party on all basic lines of policy. No political drifting apart, but on the contrary a closer unity disclosing the I.L.P. as an inseparable part of the Labour Party whether it is affiliated or not. This is especially shown in the fact that the I.L.P. swings with the

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Labour Party to the right at the very moment when the General Election has exposed the decay of the Labour Party and the inherent rottenness of all reformist policies.

2. Growing organisational separation of the I.L.P. from the Labour Party deliberately brought about by Henderson and Co. and utilised by Maxton and Co. in order to lend colour to the pretence of political independence and opposition to gradualism.
3. Political cowardice of I.L.P. leaders, who for all their desire to flaunt and magnify the importance of the I.L.P. variation on the Labour Party tune, continually run away from an open breach with the Labour Party and endeavour to hold the rank and file in check and prevent them from expressing their growing militancy.

Why are the leaders of the Labour Party forcing the pace for a break, and why is the bourgeois press deliberately going out of its way to boost the I.L.P. as a separate party? The *Times*, for example, ludicrously magnified the importance of the five I.L.P. members of Parliament as a separate Parliamentary opposition when it wrote in a leading article that:

> The first conclusion to be drawn is that the official Opposition is feeble out of all proportion to its feeble numbers. . . . The fact is that the relevance of the issue of Socialism versus Capitalism has been wiped out at least for the duration of this Parliament. . . . The only effective Opposition therefore on the Socialist side is likely to come from the small group that follows Mr. Maxton. (November 17.)

Other bourgeois papers follow the same tactic. Beaverbrook's *Daily Express* has always endeavoured to make a great man out of Maxton and the Bevin-Henderson-Odhams' *Daily Herald*, which can find no space for the resolutions of trade union branches and mass meetings always finds prominent positions for the speeches and photographs of I.L.P. leaders.

These facts and the declarations of Labour, Liberal and Conservative leaders on the dangers of a weak "Opposition" to the Government of the day all point to the conclusion that the I.L.P. is being deliberately pushed into the forefront of the political picture as an "Opposition" that will cover up the collapse of the Labour Party and hold working class support for constitutional methods and reformist co-operation with capitalism.

When Henderson and Clynes issued their warnings against the changes of revolution and the release of "ugly forms" consequent upon the defeat of the Labour Party they were not talking in the air. Neither revolutions nor even "ugly forms" take place automatically. The Labour leaders are not blind to the growth of the Communist Party, its increased poll in the Elections and the huge mass demonstrations organised under its leadership. To save the Labour Party by preventing the

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mass swing over to the Communist Party is the urgent task before the Labour leaders. Some seek consolation by hoping that the increased Communist membership will not prove stable, others pray that the policeman's baton and prison walls will succeed where lies and misrepresentation have failed. But all of them place their principal reliance on the effectiveness of a " left " Party which will stand between the Communist Party and the Labour Party and hold back the British workers from following the revolutionary policy of the Communist International.

This is the reason why the question of the rôle of the I.L.P. is of decisive importance in the present stage of the working class struggle against capitalism.

The historical rôle of the I.L.P. is to save the Labour Party and it will succeed in doing this unless its theoretical unity with the Labour Party is widely exposed. But in order to do this it is necessary to clearly understand the I.L.P. variations (not of principle) from the theory and practice of the Labour Party. There are certain non-essential differences between the I.L.P. and the Labour Party which are now being deliberately magnified in order to create the impression amongst the workers that although the Labour Party has failed the road forward is not the Communist policy through class struggle and revolution, but " Socialism in our time," through peaceful though quick progress without civil war and the overthrow of the capitalist class. To the extent that the I.L.P. is successful with this propaganda it will keep the working class enchained to the Labour Party ideology, retain votes for Labour candidates and maintain the power of the Labour Party machine.

The chief difference between the I.L.P. and the Labour Party is that the former uses more socialist phrases than the latter and sometimes even resorts to violent revolutionary language. The short summary already given of recent I.L.P. Labour Party history proves this to the hilt.

Clearly, there can be no fight against the policy of the Labour Party unless that fight is also waged against the I.L.P. The essential weakness of the growing opposition within the I.L.P. is that this fundamental fact is not yet well understood. This opposition divides itself into three tendencies ; firstly, those who think that disaffiliation from the Labour Party is the vital issue ; secondly, those who are dissatisfied with the I.L.P. leadership and want a " pure Socialist " policy, and thirdly, the as yet inconsiderable group that regards the entire theory and practice of the I.L.P. as anti-working class and counter-revolutionary.

In the rank-and-file discussions, the first tendency very often merges with the second, but it is also exploited by a section of the leadership (Maxton, Buchanan, &c.) which speculates on the possibility of heading off the dissatisfaction with the policy of the I.L.P. into a futile discussion

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on the sins of the Labour Party and the desirability of disaffiliation. At the Glasgow Divisional Conference, the Clydeside " Lefts " supported disaffiliation, which was carried by 248 votes to 61, although the National Administrative Council had decided against it the previous week. The demand for disaffiliation represents a genuine desire on the part of the rank-and-file to repudiate treacherous reformist policy, but a section of the leadership is taking up the demand in order to keep the questions of policy in the background. There are already signs that many rank-and-filers realise that the disaffiliation issue is a red herring, that the essential question is policy which must be fought out whether the organisational connection with the Labour Party is broken or not.

The sharpening of the internal fight within the I.L.P. will in any case make it less easy for the leadership to sidetrack the growing opposition on an organisational issue.

The rank-and-file who want disaffiliation do so on political grounds and the political discussion is already beginning to triumph over the question of connections with the Labour Party. Sections of the I.L.P. have already reached the stage of holding oppositional fraction meetings and have actually elaborated and circulated a new draft I.L.P. constitution as a basis for organising the opposition throughout the Party (see Appendix 1). The Birmingham Federation has denounced the N.A.C. as " cynical opportunists," and issued a call for the non-payment of membership fees.

The new draft constitution is an important indication of the frame of mind of many I.L.P. workers and as such merits careful study and analysis. The authors of the constitution commence with the assumption that the problem is the transformation of the I.L.P., they do not propose the uniting of the militant members on the basis of a revolutionary programme, but limit their approach solely to the question of a new constitution for the existing party. In other words, there is not even the suggestion that the fundamental principles of the I.L.P. need be challenged. In fact, the conception that the working class can capture the capitalist state machine remains in this new constitution as in the old. The new draft states that the I.L.P.

> . . . . is determined to win the whole machinery of government, national and local, for the working classes of the community, occupied in productive, distributive and social services.

There is not a word in the suggested draft about the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, civil war or the dictatorship of the working class. The colonies are not referred to, although the phrase " it recognises the common needs and common interests of the workers of all countries " may be taken as embracing the colonies. What, then, is the difference between this draft and the present constitution? The difference is



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chiefly in the emphasis laid on doing things quickly. For example, it is stated that " under the most favourable conditions, the gradual processes of parliamentary reform at present obtaining can never achieve the social revolution . . . the organised workers must prepare themselves to seize any opportunity that may arise. . . ." As the destruction of the capitalist state and the setting up of working class dictatorship are excluded from the constitution the above quotation can convey nothing more than the intention of quickly seizing the " whole machinery of Government." In other words, whereas the Labour Party stands for gradualism, and the I.L.P. for quick gradualism, the authors of the new constitution want gradualism with a jerk on.

Two tendencies are obviously struggling within this constitution, a conscious opportunist attempt to dress up the old theory with new deceitful " Left " phrases and a real desire to work out fighting methods of class struggle because reformist theory and tactics have failed and led to defeat. The latter view is expressed in those sections of the draft which refer to the world economic crisis as " likely to reach its climax before democracy has been won over to Socialism," and therefore the need for the organised workers capturing power " whether or not democracy is ready for it." Such expressions can only mean a belief that the workers must fight against capitalism through the exercise of class power even though " democracy," meaning the constitutional machinery of the capitalist state, continues to uphold the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

This draft constitution and the present stage of the discussion amongst the membership of the I.L.P. shows that the urgent need is a clear thrashing out of the basic questions of the class struggle and the closer working together of those members whom the General Election has taught that capitalism cannot be coaxed into Socialism but must be destroyed by the power of the revolutionary working class. This is no academic issue but a vital part of the daily fight. The I.L.P. leaders use revolutionary phrases and talk glibly about revolutionary policy, but in the end it all boils down to proposals for patching up or transforming the capitalist system. The theory and practice of the I.L.P. is based on belief in capitalism and consequently lack of belief in the working class. Like the capitalists, the I.L.P. leaders do not understand the capitalist system, its contradictions and inevitable downward course. That is why the I.L.P. policy, despite all of its easy-going Socialist phrases, always turns out to be vulgar capitalist propaganda. Capitalism is in the grip of a financial crisis. What is to be done ? Go off the gold standard, support the Labour Party's rationalisation plans, control the banks, vote for a Labour Government, increase the purchasing power of the masses, &c. These are the answers of the I.L.P. which, while it directly sabotages

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the mass action of the workers, also damps down the rising revolutionary spirit with the propaganda that the crisis can be overcome by these methods.

The deceitful propaganda of reformism holds back the workers from revolutionary struggle and deludes them that there are easier ways. But the General Election result showed that reformism has now entered the period of sharp decline. There have been two Labour Governments and the methods of the Labour Party and the I.L.P. have been tried, but capitalism still hurtles from crisis to catastrophe, savagely hacking at the workers in the process. Millions of workers are realising that the Labour Party and I.L.P. way means defeat and disaster. But there will be no automatic development of the revolutionary struggle : the capitalists with state, press and radio are madly striving to dope and baton the workers into subjection and to destroy their faith in Socialism. In these historical days of the British working class movement a great responsibility rests on the shoulders of every militant worker. Everyone must be a leader, thinking clearly and pointing out the path ahead. The working class membership of the I.L.P. can play an important part in hastening forward the whole revolutionary process in Britain, providing they fight I.L.P.ism in all its forms and for the triumph of revolutionary principles.

## APPENDIX 1.

*Suggested Draft for a new I.L.P. Constitution.*

The Independent Labour Party is a socialist organisation. It works for the abolition of the capitalist system and the entire reconstruction of our social and economic system on socialist lines, and is determined to win the whole machinery of government, national and local, for the working classes of the community, occupied in productive, distributive and social services.

The party bases its policy and methods on a recognition of the following factors in the political situation of to-day :

(1) The processes of world industrialisation, rationalisation, and international capitalist consolidation are extending rapidly. The productive capacity of industry is unlimited ; the markets of the world are flooded with goods which the workers need but cannot buy ; capitalist competition (where it survives) is playing off the workers of one country against another, while being gradually forced itself to yield to international trusts and cartels ; and the bankers and financiers have become the dictators of all government. In all these processes, the workers of all countries suffer ; and a great international economic crisis is rapidly developing.

(2) Large masses of the people are at present hopeless and apathetic, through ignorance or disillusionment ; state educational policy is still based on a capitalist and individualist conception of society and tends to cultivate acquiescence in conservative traditions and conventions ; the powerful weapon of the press is almost entirely under capitalist control. Sections of the political democracy are thus duped into giving support to their exploiters.

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(3) Under the most favourable conditions, the gradual processes of parliamentary reform at present obtaining can never achieve the social revolution (for which a new outlook and mentality are required) and if relied upon will condemn the workers to a continuation of the hardship and cruelty of poverty and the waste of human life, health and happiness involved in capitalist society. Furthermore, the world economic crisis is likely to reach its climax before democracy has been won over to socialism.

Therefore, whilst desiring to use to the utmost extent the weapons of reason and education and the machinery of political and industrial democracy, the party nevertheless believes that the organised workers must prepare themselves to seize any opportunity that may arise, either political or industrial, for the capture of power (whether or not democracy is ready for it) and for the maintenance of such power in their hands. It recognises the common needs and common interests of the workers of all countries and refuses to adopt even as a temporary expedient any national policy involving competitive struggle with those workers. It regards national boundaries as being of value only for administrative purposes, and it therefore strives for common action by the workers of the world against world capitalism, both industrially and politically.

Faced with the urgent need for militant struggle, the I.L.P. demands of all its members an active participation in its work. It welcomes the co-operation, as associates, of workers (as individuals or in affiliated groups) mainly engaged in other phases of the struggle, but retains the full control of policy and organisation in the hands of its active membership.

## II.—The I.L.P. Waits to See

### *By* B. J. BOOTHROYD

The I.L.P. leadership has now made its anti-revolutionary position quite clear. Left-wing members of the rank-and-file should by this time see quite clearly that their leaders have abandoned all pretence of moving leftwards and definitely desire to remain within the Labour Party.

A few weeks ago the N.A.C. promised that after the election they would call a conference to consider their relations with the Labour Party. Since the election they have called that conference off. Why?

Throughout the last Parliament the I.L.P. leaders continually denounced the gradualism of the Labour Party. Revolutionary phraseology had begun to appear in their speeches and articles. It is true these phrases did not make much sense. Mr. Brockway was steadily re-writing the Marxist dictionary and was using the word "revolution" to mean a series of reforms by successive Acts of Parliament, and "working class dictatorship" to mean voting every five years. [For his continual use of the adjective "mass," I have not yet found a meaning; I think he means that the working class is numerically large.]

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But at least that kind of language was a recognition of the presence in the rank-and-file of an increasing number of people with a revolutionary consciousness.

Before the election there was never any doubt expressed as to the gradualism of the Labour Party. The only clear reason given for postponing disaffiliation was that, while the Labour Party remained in office, the I.L.P. could try and speed up its reforms more effectively by remaining in the Party.

But now that the Labour Party is impotent in Parliament, that reason falls flat. It is therefore clear that the I.L.P. leaders have called off that conference because they have not made up their minds what to do and want more time to think. Now that a situation has arisen in which they have to define their position, they find they cannot. They have been calling themselves revolutionary, but now, finding they can do nothing in Parliament, they do not know how to get on with their revolution. The electorate has quietly removed their revolutionary weapons. It was very unkind of the electorate.

But something had to be said. So Brockway announced in the *New Leader* (November 13) :—

> . . . . At the moment there are two unsettled questions about the Labour Party. Will it permit the necessary Socialist activity within it? Will it remain the political expression of the mass (sic) working class movement tending towards Socialism? The second unsettled question is: Will it give the necessary lead for a decisive transition to Socialism in that situation (the breakdown of Capitalism)? Both these questions will soon become clearer. Then will be the time to decide. But the I.L.P. will not swerve from its course.

[I included his last sentence about not swerving from the course for the pleasure of writing it, and because, without some such platitude, there would be no verisimilitude in a quotation from an official I.L.P. utterance.]

We are to understand, therefore, that after two years' complaining of the Labour Party's gradualism the I.L.P. leaders have decided, in the last two weeks, that perhaps they were wrong after all about the Labour Party's gradualism and must wait a bit longer to find out. The idea, I suppose, is that the very fact of being out of office may rouse the Labour Party to some new revolutionary activity. But how long are we to wait? Until the next Labour Government? Or until the bell rings to indicate the breakdown of Capitalism?

I believe, however, that I am flattering Mr. Brockway by suggesting that he means anything at all. Such a statement, such questions, could only be uttered by a leader who is merely spinning words together to fill up time and space, and gives his followers no credit for intelligent

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criticism. Such incoherence is only worth mentioning because of the object lesson it provides for those genuine Socialists within the I.L.P. who have not yet made up their minds about their leaders' intentions.

Well, there will doubtless be a fine debate on Disaffiliation at the I.L.P. Conference at Easter. But I appeal to the leftward-moving I.L.P.ers not to wait till then before making up their minds about their relation to either the Labour Party or the I.L.P. Disaffiliation is not a Socialist issue. For many of those who demand it, it involves merely the difference between two speeds of gradualism. If the I.L.P. were disaffiliated to-morrow, it would remain a completely reformist body. The real issue for the left-wingers is Reform or Revolution.

The only difference that Disaffiliation would make is that the I.L.P. would be more free to pursue the discussion of its reformist policies to their logical end, and thus hasten the inevitable split between its right and left elements.

And that, I am convinced, is why the leaders are anxious to postpone the settlement of the question as long as possible.

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# ORGANISING THE FIGHT AGAINST THE MEANS TEST

## *By* E. WOOLLEY

THE operation of the means test represents the opening out of the biggest attack on the whole workers' movement in Britain that has yet taken place. One million unemployed workers are to face a system of receiving relief that puts in the shade for savagery any previous methods of receiving relief. Such a pressure is to be imposed that unless resistance is organised on a broader basis the results will be serious both for unemployed and employed.

Firstly, the possibility of a claimant being able to live without any assistance is to be gone into. In this everything is taken into account. If a single channel remains open for the worker to get a single crust of bread, no relief will be given. Such questions will be levelled as: Is anyone receiving pensions? Is anyone in the household receiving wages or other income? What sort of assets are there in the home? Is there any other member of the family on relief or dole? This in itself is a direct attack on both employed and unemployed. Many employed will have to maintain what the committees will determine to be a dependant.

These are only the immediate effects. With the starvation weapon they hope to force the unemployed on the factories, to seek work at rates lower than those being worked; they hope to create such an army of workers looking for any way open to get bread, that an army of blacklegs will be created. This development of the means test takes places as the first step in the attack on the wages of all workers. It is at this point that we get to the central purpose of the means test. The unemployed have been "blackleg proof" too long. They have been the backbone of the employed workers' fight. In strikes and in preparation for strikes they have played the rôle of activising and strengthening the movement. Only if this spirit is broken can the capitalist class proceed with their programme of bigger cuts in wages and the worsening in the conditions of employed workers.

It is in relation to this that the whole of the employed and unemployed must face the means test with the determination, born of the knowledge of what is involved, to fight back this sinister plan for plundering the working class.

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The reply of the workers to this offensive against them can only be measured in terms of the movement prior to the General Strike. Upon a new basis, under different leadership, hundreds of thousands of workers have marched on the streets, facing all the forces of the police, and in many cases (Glasgow, Manchester, London) engaging in fierce fights with the police. Everywhere the right of the workers to march on the streets has been maintained in face of all the military plans of the chiefs of police.

The General Election was intended to " channel the mass revolutionary movement into constitutional parliamentary spheres." All capitalist parties (Conservative, Liberal, Labour, Independent Labour Party) poured out propaganda calculated to break up the " new general strike movement." One week following this election the mass movement is seen rising again upon a strengthened basis. Strikes of Textile workers against longer hours, Boilermakers' strike on the Clyde, Dyers' strike in London, Builders' strike in London, Steel workers' strike in Oxford, Miners' strikes in Northumberland, the rank-and-file in the Hackney tram depôt hold a packed meeting and take important decisions to fight mass dismissals. These are strikes that take place in a period of one week after the General Election. In the same period mass unemployed demonstrations spread over the country again, and in this week we learn that " dismissals " take place in the navy to prevent another outbreak of strike action by these workers. Such is the rising movement of the workers, after the whole machine of capitalism has done its damnedest to break it up. This movement is also reflected most clearly in the formation of new branches of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (25 per cent. increase), and the breaking into the Communist Party by thousands of workers.

Never before was it necessary to find the road to centralising this movement and organising it on the broadest basis to assure the most speedy and widespread mobilisation for joint action. The problem is how to organise into activity the present organised forces, to bring into action greater numbers of workers.

The unemployed still constitute the largest organised force, fighting against the means test. Let us see how best this force can be organised for the further development of the central line of action. The local N.U.W.M. has 300 members with 50 fully active and prepared to march every day. This group is able by one or two meetings at the exchange to mobilise 1,000 in demonstration to the Public Assistance Committees, etc. But there are 10,000 signing on at the exchange. They sign on usually over the days of Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are five hours of signing on. Our task is to be regularly in touch with all these unemployed and to win every one for the fight.

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Fifty unemployed can make five groups of ten. Such groups, going on duty at the labour exchange for one hour each on the three days of signing on, will ensure that we reach every worker there. Three hours' work of organised activity along this line every week will mean that all the unemployed have a leadership that is close to them.

How can they work? Each group has its leader. The five group leaders meet together after signing on time (4 p.m.), give reports of the day's work and plan out the next day's work. Every day particular issues are taken upon which all the groups concentrate.

Ten groups of workers all day long discussing outside the labour exchange and P.A.C. Not giving long-winded speeches but first listening to the workers' point of view. Replying to it. Listening again. Replying to it. The group leader moving from group to group to ensure that the group work is kept going.

The big demonstration is fixed a week ahead. The teams are on on the Friday. They announce the demonstration. "Are you coming fellow-worker?" "Yes, certainly, it's time something was done," says one worker. Another says, "I don't see what use it is"; another says, "We have marched before but it ended up the same"; still a further one states, "I don't believe in running my head against the policeman's baton." "Is it well prepared? Have you got a good plan? If it's going to be a real fight I am coming." The workers who don't come on demonstrations have some reason for not doing. To win them we have to find the reason, and reason with the worker on this basis.

Friday, 4 p.m., the five group leaders meet. Collectively they have a list of points made by workers. How can we deal with these views expressed by the workers? Point by point the reply is found. Each group leader is thus equipped for the next day's work. Each one explains to his group as it commences work how to talk on the various points. All day long the work of reasoning with the workers on this basis goes on. This is Wednesday. Group leaders meet again. What is the mood now? More and more have been won for our policy. There are still some left. On the Friday a duplicated sheet is prepared. The main points that have been discovered are dealt with. In clear terms the purpose of the demonstration is announced along with the proposed programme that has been formulated on the basis of information gathered. The means test is at the front, but there are also a dozen other grievances that if put in the programme will link up into the fight so many other groups. The programme unites all the workers for action.

A meeting is being held at night to discuss the programme and to elect a broad Committee to make final arrangements and to generally lead the demonstration. Full discussion is encouraged at the meeting.

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Not a long speech but the chairman opens the meeting by giving a report on all the grievances known. On the basis of this the N.U.W.M. Branch suggests the following programme of demands. There is such interest that the meeting breaks up into groups discussing various points. Order at the meeting is sacrificed with a view to getting as many workers as possible to express themselves on the fighting demands. A worker states, "This is most important"; another states, "No it is not, this is"; the chairman explains that just because the particular point hurts a particular worker he naturally thinks it is "the issue of the fight." Let us link them all together. We will all fight for what we want, by all fighting together. Are there any more grievances to be dealt with? Another grievance is found that means that as there are 50 affected by it directly, that another fifty have been won for a determined fight. This is how we develop the campaign for the adoption of the programme of demands.

We have got the programme. Who will lead the fight for it? Nominations for a committee of 40. A broad Committee is elected. As we develop our forces we elect marshals first for groups of streets and, as we get more, for single streets. The marshals are mobilisers. Each marshal knows where to find the lads. He can get in touch with 50 almost at any time. When we reach this stage we will be able to reply really "blow for blow to capitalism." We will be able to manœuvre with the police. We can work to a detailed plan of action. In all this work, the question of "strike action" as the strongest weapon of the workers against the means test will be kept to the front. In all our "organised personal" work emphasis all the time will be placed on this.

Selection of factories. If no contacts there, get groups going. Talk to the workers. Gather information on what the workers are thinking. A march to the factory by all the unemployed who have been won to the realisation of the importance of this. The speaker deals with the subject in relation to conditions in the factory. The Means Test. Yes, and then there is this grievance in the shop. Employed workers, Hands up those against the means test. Hands up those who are against mass dismissals, who is against the present piece-work system, &c., &c. Workers, will you fight with us on a joint programme of demands such as . . . (reciting to them all the issues)? Yes, you all agree, but the strike must be prepared. How can we prepare it? When do your trade union branches meet. All of you go to them. Get resolutions passed, not calling upon the Union officials to fight (when it is clear they won't), but "this branch having had reported to it the programme of action for Thompson's workshop, endorses it, and agrees to give full support to all our members in the fight to achieve it." We instruct all our members to attend the works' meeting on Tuesday (dinner hour) to

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elect a Works Committee that will get down to all the organising work that will ensure a 100 per cent. stoppage and that the question of feeding, picketing, &c., &c., are arranged for. This is a line of work that if tackled with energy can be accomplished in a short time ; if tackled by the old unorganised habits of just rolling up to the factory gate and then making a noise, will never be tackled.

The organisation of strike action must be taken up with the feeling that it *can* be organised. There can be no doubting the fact that the workers in the factories are ready for this action. The point is that they have been so chained up to the union machine that they don't in most cases see the possibility of going ahead, other than by sanction of the union officials. As soon as we can show that the rank-and-file themselves can organise every sphere of strike activity, then the movement which now is narrow will broaden out at a speed which the union officials will be unable to stem.

The first step in this work is the organising of local conferences at which delegates from trade union branches, workshops, labour exchanges, and streets (women) are secured. These conferences should discuss the whole situation in which the workers find themselves. A concrete report on this should be prepared. What are the conditions in the workshops, how many have been struck off benefit and the P.A.C., high prices in the locality, conditions of children in the area, impending wage attacks. On the basis of this a complete programme for the locality should be worked out.

All this should be brought into the campaign of organising the Conference. The aim should be to include in the programme every issue that will mean that groups even of workers will see in the programme something to fight for. The idea of sympathetic strike action is good but the workers will come forward with much greater determination if included in the programme is a concrete demand whereby they will stand to win something by taking action.

The purpose of a programme is to unite workers. The number of workers who will be united in the struggle will depend to the extent that our fighting demands express what all sections are prepared to fight for. The task of the conferences is to work this out. Our work is to get strike action in the factories recognised as the strongest weapon that the workers can wield.

Our campaign should proceed along all fronts. Factory gates, Union branch, labour exchange, streets, in the shopping streets with posters. Prepare a circular for the Conference and send it to Trade Union branches, Shop Stewards, Co-operative Guilds, and other working class organisations. The Conference should be convened by, if possible,

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a trade union branch, failing this the Charter Committee or united front committee.

Each factory should be approached on the basis of conditions existing in the factory, plus high prices, means test, &c. Leaflets and dinner-hour meetings, with always keeping in mind that whatever action is developed will depend on how we can organise a group to take the lead inside the factory. The speaker is not the main one at these meetings. A capable comrade talking and observing the workers can play the greatest part. A worker interjects showing support. One or two get the *Daily Worker*. Those that show sympathy in any way must be followed up. Where do they live. Visit them at their home. Come back at finishing time and walk home with them. This should be done even if there is general support. Without a leadership among the workers in the shop, strikes cannot be organised. Our path is one contact. Two, and then we have a group of three who will then work together in an organised way. Everything must be done to equip these workers to play the part required of them.

Apart from this a general invitation should be given to workers at the factory to attend the conference. But even here our task is to get hold of those who come from the factory and see in them the workers who, even if not prepared now, will be the ones upon whom leadership depends.

Every contact in the unions should be approached personally, and fully prepared for raising the Conference in his branch. Workers may not be able to speak ; therefore a short statement should be written out ; a resolution drafted which will include something affecting members of the branch. The members of the branch should see in attending the conference a means of fighting better for what they are concerned about. Delegates from the N.U.W.M. and the Minority Movement should be appointed to visit branches (this excludes those attending as a consequence of a request coming from them arising out of invitations for them to do so on the circular sent out). A letter sent before stating you are coming will raise the whole question sharply in branches even if we have no contacts. The holding of the successful conference should not mean that having achieved something, we can sit back feeling contented, but we should recognise that the conference represents the coming together of militant elements in the workers' ranks. Our task from this is to develop all such elements into activity or into preparing strike activity.

At the conference itself a statement should be made on how strike action can be prepared and organised (feeding, picketing, &c., &c.). The best and most important places for strike action should be selected. Immediately following the conference, the decisions should be explained

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to these workers. Factory sheets, dinner hour meetings, the visitation of workers' homes. Street meetings around the factory. Marches of the unemployed with groups of the unemployed, displaying initiative in talking personally to the workers. Twenty groups of employed and unemployed in deep discussion would be far better than one speaker addressing a large meeting, in which many of his words have no relation to points in the workers' mind. This can be achieved by selecting a number of unemployed who can lead such discussion, the holding of a meeting with them before the march at which a full explanation of what is required of them is given.

In all this work, and in much more besides, the importance of the *Daily Worker* should be recognised. A factory paper, because it links up the workers in one factory makes all these workers feel so much stronger. Likewise the *Daily Worker*. A worker in a factory buys it and immediately in reading reports of what is taking place in other parts of the country readily feels that he is not alone. This will be reflected in his work in the factory. Remove the feeling of isolation and a big stride is made to bigger things. Next the *Daily Worker* is the leader of the fight throughout the country ; a correct direction of the work can only come through such a national mouthpiece of the workers.

To make the paper even a better leader than what it is is the task of comrades having experiences in the fight. Let the paper have these so that comrades in other areas will read them and by this find out how to set about the work. We have big tasks. Many new comrades will be applying themselves to them and the *Daily Worker* must take such workers by the hand and assist them in going forward in their work. The movement in Britain is rising quickly. The problem is one of independent leadership. Such leadership exists among the rank-and-file workers. How to develop this and aid it in going forward to leadership has been the purpose of this article. Much, much more can be said about it. The German Party, and other parties, have had much experience and we can learn much from them. In the Red International of Labour Union Congress decisions and in the Conference on Strike Strategy (at Strasburg) all these experiences form the groundwork. No comrade who is seriously intent on giving his best to the development of the strike movement can be without copies of both of these.[1]

We must equip ourselves in the shortest possible time in order to give direction to the movement. Given this, the next few months will see broad strike action developing and the whole revolutionary movement going forward to new and greater battles. Battles along the path of the " Workers' way out of the Crisis."

[1]Obtainable through the Workers' Bookshop, 16 King Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2, 6d. and 2d. respectively.

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# TARIFFS AND THE WORKING CLASS

## *By* A. MACGREGOR

THE General Election of 1931 provides us with many important lessons, especially from the point of view of the winning of the majority of the workers for the revolutionary way out of the present crisis of the bankrupt capitalist system. It is obvious that the question of the way out will not, and cannot, be decided by Parliament or by Elections. It is the question of the struggle between the classes, and such vital questions as the way out, vital both for the capitalists and for the workers, can only be decided through a series of class battles in the factories and on the streets.

But the results of the General Election show, among other things, that Parliamentary illusions still exist to a very marked degree amongst the workers of this country, and that the capitalists can still make use of lies, demagogic arguments, &c., as a means of winning some sections of the workers for their anti-working class policy. It is upon this aspect of the Election result that we wish to concentrate the attention of our readers.

During the recent Election many thousands of employed, and even unemployed workers, voted for the Tories, only because they believed that the policy of tariffs would provide a cure for unemployment. The terrific demagogical agitation led by the Tories and other supporters of the National Government which presented the issue as being not one of " more versus less dole," but " work versus the dole," met with success among certain sections of the unemployed workers.

Can Tariffs prevent the development of the decline of British capitalism ? Can Tariffs cure unemployment ? Should the working class be in favour of Tariffs or for Free Trade ? What do Tariffs mean for the workers ? Let us consider in detail all these questions.

### *Can Tariffs Cure Unemployment ?*

At present all the capitalists are talking about the necessity of balancing the trade of Great Britain, of the necessity of increasing the " competitive power " of British goods. Both factors are regarded as most important immediate remedies for the saving of the capitalist system of this country.

From a purely economic aspect the protectionist policy means, first of all, the abandonment of the classical form of capitalist exchange of goods ; so-called " free competition." The development of capitalism

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in Europe and the American continent shows that the protectionist policy stimulated the development of the concentration of industry in cartels and trusts, and the dominating power of monopoly undertakings within the country. Therefore, it is possible and probable that centralisation and rationalisation of some backward branches of British industry will be developed through tariffs, more quickly than has hitherto been the case.

Hilferding, in his *Finance Capital*, written in 1912 when he was still a Marxist, stated :

> The Industrial tariff was one of the most effective means for the advancement of the cartels, on the one hand because it impedes foreign competition, but on the other hand also because it gives the cartels the possibility to clear the difference in the tariffs once they have already developed their own export capacities. (p. 385.)
>
> . . . So it becomes one of the chief interests of cartelised industry to establish a continuous protective tariff, since firstly it ensures the existence of the cartel, and secondly because it enables it to sell its products in the home market at an extra profit. The amount of this extra profit is realised by increasing home prices over those obtaining in the world market. (p. 380.)

Lenin, dealing with the relation between tariffs and the three most important aspects of imperialism, concentration, monopoly and rationalisation, wrote in *Imperialism, the Last Stage of Capitalism*, as follows :

> The facts show that differences between capitalist countries, *e.g.*, in the matter of protection or free trade only give rise to insignificant variations in the form of monopolies or in the moment of their appearance ; and that the birth of monopolies as the result of concentration of production is a general and fundamental law of contemporary capitalist development. (p.16.)

We will deal later with the social significance of tariffs. At the moment we will continue our consideration of the possible economic effect of tariffs upon the development of British imperialism.

Let it be assumed that tariffs will develop rationalisation and concentration of some sections of industry. Let us further assume that the policy of tariffs will to some extent help to overcome the separation and individualism in the ownership of industry, which is typical of the development of British industry up to now.

Within Great Britain—possibly within the Empire (although the creation of the Empire as one economic unit is as difficult as the introduction of tariffs)—monopoly prices may come into being put forward by certain monopoly groups of the financial oligarchy. Does this mean that the decline of British capitalism can be stayed through tariffs ? Does this mean any fundamental improvement of the basic industries of this country ? Does this mean any appreciable improvement of Great Britain's position in the world market ? Not at all.

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Protection means the setting up of tariffs on the whole or the biggest portion of imports into this country. The chief classes of imports in the first eight months of 1931 compared with the first eight months of 1913 are (*Times*, November 2, 1931):

| | 1913 | | 1931 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | Per cent. | £ | Per cent. |
| Food, drink and tobacco | 189,373,000 | 38 | 267,366,000 | 48 |
| Raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured .. .. | 171,814,000 | 35 | 116,428,000 | 21 |
| Manufactures .. .. | 133,558,000 | 27 | 165,233,000 | 30 |

These figures show that half the chief classes of imports are foodstuffs, one-fifth raw materials for industry. It means that tariffs on two-thirds of imports into this country will not increase employment, but will increase the cost of living and cost of production in those branches of industry which work mainly on imported raw materials.

A superficial observer may be led to remark that tariffs will increase employment in those industries which produce those manufactured goods which are now imported.

Such an assumption would be incorrect. One of the most prominent capitalist journals, the *Economist*, has drawn up some very interesting tables, which include all trades with an unemployment figure exceeding 2,500 at August 25, 1930. These trades are classified into three groups:

(1) Trades which cannot be directly assisted by Protection.

(2) Trades where there are possibilities of benefit and handicap as a result of Protection.

(3) Trades that would definitely be injured by Protection.

These tables show that tariffs could under certain circumstances reduce unemployment in such trades which compose only about 25 per cent. of the total unemployed figure. To 75 per cent. of unemployed workers, even under the most favourable circumstances, Protection cannot afford assistance, and in the majority of cases can only worsen the perspective of immediate employment and worsen the general conditions of unemployed (rise in the cost of living). These figures show that in the basic sections of British industries (coal, textile, metal and shipbuilding) which are the keystones of British capitalism, Protection brings no improvement. Therefore, any attempt to present Protection as a general remedy, as a means of saving this bankrupt system, is wrong.

But if we consider carefully the second group of trades where there are some possibilities of benefit through tariffs, we must arrive at the

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conclusion, that even in this group, the possibility of a reduction in unemployment is very slight, due to the following two main reasons.

Firstly, the majority of trades in the second group depend largely on overseas markets. Therefore, Protection on imported goods cannot improve the world market conditions in favour of protected branches of British industry. A. W. Rather, who is one of the most prominent defenders of British capitalism, and who wrote a special book against the French economist, Professor Siegfried and his theory of the permanent decline of British capitalism, is forced to recognise :[1]

> That even in this group it is doubtful whether employment would be increased on balance. . . . If protection was confined to those industries which are not predominantly exporting, it could only affect 11.3 per cent. of the unemployment in the whole of this group of industries. These industries which relied mainly on the home market accounted for only *one-fortieth of the aggregate of unemployment in Great Britain.*

Secondly, the introduction of tariffs will, as we explained at the beginning of this article, increase the tempo of rationalisation in the protected trades. This means that further hundreds of thousands of workers will be thrown on to the streets. It is very probable that finally the increase of unemployment through rationalisation will be greater than the one-fortieth part of the unemployed who may get work through Protection.

### *Examples of other countries using Protection*

These theoretical conclusions have already been verified in practice, through examples of other countries. Evidence of this can be quoted from the examples of Germany, U.S.A. and South Africa. Different parts of the world, different levels of development, different conditions, and conclusions which can be made in respect to the influence of Protection on trade and on employment are identical.

Both in Germany and the U.S.A., the policy of Protection has been carried out over a period of the last 10-15 years. Yet unemployment in both these countries is now higher even than in Great Britain. In Germany there are now about 5 millions and in U.S.A. about 10 millions unemployed. The policy of sheltered tariffs did not " save " these countries from deep economic crisis.

Even in Great Britain those branches of industry which are already sheltered, suffer from the crisis to no less a degree than in the unsheltered industries.

In the Union of South Africa tariffs were introduced in 1925. Professor Freemantle of Cape Town University, who is well-known as one of the best experts on prevailing economic conditions in South Africa,

[1] *Is Britain Decadent ?* (p. 253-7.)



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wrote the following to the *Economist* on the relation between tariffs and production and trade.

> Industry rises and falls with the general prosperity of the country and it is impossible to detect in the figures any trace of the effects of the tariffs of 1925, except that in return for *making life hard for the poor* we have somewhat swelled the numbers of underpaid industrialists. No doubt also part of the bill has been paid by a certain crippling of the primary industries of agriculture and mining, on which alone, as things now are, our industries depend for their existence. (October 31, 1931, p. 799.)

Another expert on South Africa, Mr. Elmslie, who is Trade Commissioner in the Union of South Africa, wrote an official report about the practical effects of Protection. He wrote in that report:

> To certain industries the tariff policy has been of immense advantage. The raising of prices has rendered possible the development of sugar, wheat and dairy industries and without the tariffs many of the *secondary* industries could not have grown or continued to exist in face of competition from more highly industrial countries with lower production costs and larger scale of production. . . . (H.M.S.O. July, 1931.)

The *Economist*, in its comments on this official report, quite correctly asks: "But who has paid for this benefit?" and equally correctly answers: "Not the foreigner, but the exporters *and the workers* of South Africa." (October 31, 1931.)

The following quotation from E. Varga on the Bankers' Manifesto of July 18, 1930, in relation to the effects of protection in Great Britain, speaks for itself.

> The industries most deeply interested are those which produce chiefly for the *home market* and which are most seriously threatened by dumping on the part of foreign competitors. It is clear that the change from free trade to protection *would not by any means solve the problems of British capitalism*, even if it were possible in the present period of declining capitalism to talk of "solution" at all. An appeal to the example of America or France is both incorrect and misleading for these countries can dispose of a larger proportion of their industrial production in the home market than England, where the peasant class has almost entirely disappeared, and where practically the whole population lives by industry and trade. On the contrary, the adoption of protection *will seriously affect a number of industries* which have up to the present bought semi-manufactured goods chiefly at dumping prices, and later exported them as finished manufactured articles. . . .

### "*The War of Trade*" *becomes* "*The Trade of War*"

Tariffs means a strengthening of monopoly in the home market and an attempt to maintain the monopoly of British capitalism within the Empire and in the world market. In this regard Lenin said:

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> . . . the monopoly which has sprung from free competition does not drive the latter out of existence, but co-exists over it and with it, thus giving rise to a number of very acute and very great contradictions, antagonisms and conflicts.[2]

In her *Akkumulation des Kapitals* (p. 336), Rosa Luxemburg underlined the significance of tariffs as a means of war preparations :

> . . . The inner contradictions of international tariff policy . . . find their most obvious expression namely in that the modern high protective tariff system—corresponding to the colonial expansion and the sharpened conflicts within the capitalist milieu—was also actually brought into being as the basis for increased and strengthened armaments.

A perusal of the American, French, German, and Italian newspapers immediately following on the General Election gives an immediate understanding of the fact that the introduction of tariffs in Great Britain means an intensification of the struggle for the world market, for world supremacy, and of the tremendous deepening of the existing contradictions between different imperialist powers.

Viewed from this international aspect, the introduction of tariffs in Great Britain means sailing ahead full steam and full speed towards a *new imperialist war.*

The fight for foreign markets during the present crisis becomes sharper and sharper. Protection is one of the forms of this fight for world markets.

V. M. Molotov, in his speech to the XVI. Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in July, 1930, said :

> The struggle for markets leads to the growth of Protectionism, *i.e.*, the protecting of the internal markets from foreign capital and, on this basis, to an even more intensive struggle for foreign markets (for disposal of material and export of capital). The *present crisis* is driving the capitalist countries with particular violence towards super-protectionism, the growth of protectionist tendencies is telling everywhere. . . . In Great Britain the protectionist movement is developing on a particularly large scale. All this leads to a tremendous sharpening of the struggle for markets, *a tremendous sharpening of international contradictions.*[3]

In 1930, E. Varga wrote the following in connection with Protection in Great Britain :

> The establishment of Protection for England by means of free trade within the Empire, or by a system of preferential tariffs between the Dominions and the motherland, is also a political move directed against the United States and will introduce a new element into the forces which are accentuating the contradictions between England and the United States.[4]

For this reason the Communist Party of Great Britain is quite correct when it designates the National Government, which is introducing tariffs, " the Government of Hunger and War."

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[2] Lenin, *Imperialism* (p. 102-3).
[3] *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism*, by V. M. Molotov (p. 16-17).
[4] *The Communist International*, Vol. VII., No. 9 (August 15, p. 135).

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*Tariffs—as one of the important forms of the capitalist attack against the workers.*

We have dealt with several aspects of the tariff question. We have shown that the establishment of tariffs cannot " save " the position of British capitalism, and cannot cure unemployment. We have shown also that tariffs lead to the deepening both of the so-called " internal " and " external " contradictions of the present system. The present world crisis and particularly the decline of British imperialism, are the main reasons for this " final surrender by the English ruling class of the free trade principle and the acceptance of a new economic policy—a high tariff wall against imports, including the import of foodstuffs." (*Daily Worker*, July 5, 1931.)

The introduction of tariffs is a sign of the recognition of Great Britain's decline as the first world imperialist power. In his letter to Nikolayon, Engels regarded tariffs as a defence adopted by other imperialist countries against the supremacy of Britain. He wrote :

> I regard this general turn to protective tariffs, not simply as an accident, but rather as a reaction against England's unbearable industrial monopoly.[5]

Now, after Great Britain has lost world supremacy, it introduces tariffs as a means of defence against the supremacy of the U.S.A. and other imperialist countries.

Let us consider briefly the *class character of tariffs* and its meaning from the point of view of the struggle between the classes.

*Tariffs are an important factor in the plans of the British ruling class to save British capitalism at the expense of the workers and the colonies.* The *Economist* says quite openly :

> There is no escape to-day from the necessity of scaling down the cost of our products to meet the reduced purchasing power of our customers abroad. (August 29, 1931.)

The main points of this plan to increase the competitive power of British goods are :

(1) Direct wage reductions.

(2) Rationalisation.

(3) Reduction of real wages and increase in the cost of living through the imposition of tariffs, the abolition of the gold standard, temporarily or permanently, depreciation of the pound (possible inflation).

(4) Worsening of working conditions (hours and so on).

(5) Attack against all militant and revolutionary working class organisations.

[5]Engel's letter to Nikolayon dated June 18th, 1892.

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Hence all this talk about the " Nation's " interest, about " equality " of sacrifices, National Government, and so on.

The *Economist* formulates this policy as follows :

> If these hard facts were laid clearly before the people, we are confident that the response would be a general willingness to contribute by a *broad readjustment of wages, salaries*, costs and prices, to a national effort to regain our lost ground in the world markets. (August, 29, 1931. p. 381.)

However, we wish to limit ourselves in this article mainly to one aspect of this plan of the British capitalists—to the social meaning of tariffs.

The well-known economist, J. M. Keynes, contributed an article to the *New Statesman and Nation* in March, 1931, in which he developed all possible arguments in favour of a Revenue Tariff. There he considered the possibilities of increasing profits, and instead of the direct reduction of wages, proposed the Revenue Tariff as a means of raising prices and reducing the real income of the workers.

A. W. Rather, in his book, already quoted by us, describes the standpoint of Professor Keynes as follows :

> A policy of wage reductions would not only be unjust, but would also be impracticable. It would be unjust because we should be asking the workers to shoulder the main burden of the depression, while at the same time we are handing over to the rentier class, unwittingly, a considerably larger income than before the slump in prices. It would not be practicable, says Mr. Keynes, because *the workers* who are strongly organised in Trade Unions, *would not agree to wage reductions*. A Revenue Tariff *gets round these difficulties*, for it would raise the prices at which the manufacturer sells his product, but it would not increase his costs. *The worker would suffer a virtual reduction in his income* it is true, but so also would the rentier and other classes in the community. The necessary sacrifice would be shared among all classes. *The Revenue Tariff would also get round the difficulty of working-class opposition.* For the worker would receive a reduction in his real income as a result of the general rise in prices *without his having a say in the matter*. . . . (p. 244.)

A few pages further on, the same author openly recognises that

> as a matter of fact *the burden of a tariff would mainly fall on the shoulders of the working class*, for a tariff mainly affects those commodities such as food, clothing and footwear, on which the working classes spend the main part of their incomes. (p. 255.)

Another well-known economist, the French Professor André Siegfried, in his book on the decline of British capitalism, dealing with tariffs, says :

> *Another method of reducing real wages is by a tariff.* It would raise prices, at any rate in the home market, and a *larger share of the proceeds would go to profits* in comparison with wages. . . . Such is certainly the *underlying motive* even though the system may be presented to the working class as being the best guarantee of their standard of living.[6]

[6] *England's Crisis*, by André Siegfried (p. 166).

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The theoreticians of the capitalist class consider very carefully the question of the form and strategy of attack against the working class. The above-quoted economist gives the British capitalists noteworthy advice on methods of attacking the workers. He also takes into consideration the lessons to be learned from the military strategy of the imperialist war, 1914-18. In connection with direct wage reductions he writes :

> Such a programme has no chance of success in this form, for frontal attacks against wages are no better than were frontal attacks against the trenches during the war. (p. 156.)

He then goes on to describe different indirect forms of attack against the workers (rationalisation, tariffs, raising of prices) and cynically admits :

> *The workman, who never fully understands such subtle distinctions, will accept a greater reduction in real than in nominal wages, especially if it is done without his realising it. With the aid of certain subterfuges this is not impossible.* . . . (p. 156.)

This is the clear, unmasked class language of our class enemies. The capitalists openly use such language only in theoretical books, but in their work amongst the masses, for instance, during the Election, they endeavour through talk of the " common interest of the whole of the nation " about " equality of sacrifices " to disguise their robber plans against the workers and the working population.

### *What is the Alternative?*

The foregoing explanations make it more than ever obvious that the workers must fight against the policy of tariffs. Every attempt to present tariffs as a " lesser evil " as a means of preventing dole or wage cuts, as has been alleged by Henderson at the Bristol T.U.C., must be considered as an open form of support of capitalist plans against the workers. The T.U.C. Resolution of June 26, 1930, which openly advocates an Imperial policy, implies support of Empire Tariffs, and consequently support of the attack on the wages of the workers, the standard of living of the workers through a rise in prices. In this way the General Council endeavours to hide from the mass of trade union membership its acceptance of a policy of lowering the standard of living of the working class.[7]

What is the alternative confronting the working class in such a situation ? We have shown that the protectionist policy is a normal result of the development of Imperialism. Does this mean that the working class should advocate the policy of free trade ?

[7]Incidentally the General Council of the T.U.C. adopted the same attitude in regard to the abolition of the Gold Standard. The *Economist*, in its issue of September 19, 1931, page 504, explained correctly the reasons for the General Council's declaration in favour of the abolition of the Gold Standard : " We suspect that the idea behind the advocacy of abandonment of the Gold Standard is that it would be easier to *resist demands for wage increases* by way of compensation for an enhanced cost of living than it would be to ask for reduction in wages as matters stand."

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Not at all. *The alternative before the workers is not that of tariffs versus free trade, but Socialism versus capitalism.* Examining the policy of the working class in such a situation, Lenin quotes a statement of R. Hilferding in his *Finance-Capital* as being the correct answer to this problem. Hilferding wrote :

> It is not the business of the proletariat to set up in opposition to progressive capitalist policy, the era of free trade which has passed, and adopt a hostile attitude towards the State. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance-capital, of Imperialism, *cannot be Free Trade, but Socialism alone.* It is not an ideal, such as the restoration of Free Trade, which has now become a reactionary ideal—which should be the object of proletarian policy, *but solely the complete abolition of competition by the overthrow of capitalism.* . . .

British imperialism is rapidly losing its position as the leading imperialist power. The superiority of American imperialism more and more forces Great Britain into the background. Tariffs cannot prevent this development. A similar situation developed prior to the world Imperialist war, with only one difference. Before the war the chief and most dangerous enemy of imperialistic Great Britain was Germany, now it is the U.S.A.

Dealing with the rôle of tariffs in such a situation, Lenin, in *Imperialism*, wrote as follows :

> The superiority of German (now U.S.A.—A.M.) imperialism over British imperialism is stronger than a wall of colonial frontiers or of protective tariffs. To " conclude " from this that there is any advantage in favour of free trade and " peaceful democracy " is to forget the essential features and qualities of imperialism, is to substitute reformism for Marxism. . . . (p. 136.)

Tariffs cannot prevent the collapse of British imperialism. Does this mean that all possibilities for the capitalists are exhausted, that the revolution will now come of its own accord ? Is it correct to say that " for British imperialism there is no way out of the collapse " ?

Such formulations are incorrect. There are no " absolutely hopeless situations " for the capitalists. If the present crisis of British imperialism ends with the overthrow of the capitalist system as a whole and with victory for Socialism, this depends entirely upon the development of the gigantic class struggles now commencing in this country. *It depends entirely upon the resistance of the working class against all attempts at saving this bankrupt system at the expense of the workers, and upon the ability of the masses of the workers under revolutionary leadership, to transfer this fight against the capitalist attack, into the fight for the proletarian revolution.*

Lenin always devoted considerable attention to all those tendencies to present the crisis of capitalism as one from which there was " no way out." In his excellent speech at the 2nd World Congress of the Communist

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International in 1920 he fought energetically against the slightest attempts of a fatalistic approach in the appreciation of the possible perspectives of the development of the crisis. He said :

> On the other hand, some revolutionaries at times endeavour to prove that this crisis is an absolutely hopeless one.
>
> This is erroneous. There are no conditions which can be absolutely hopeless. The conduct of the bourgeoisie is like that af a desperate robber who has lost his bearings. It is committing blunder upon blunder, aggravating the situation and hastening its own downfall. All this is true. But one cannot " prove " that there is absolutely no possibility for the bourgeoisie to beguile this or that minority of the exploited by means of some concession ; that it cannot suppress this or that movement or crush an uprising of some fraction of the oppressed and exploited. To attempt to " prove " beforehand the " absolute " hopelessness is merely pedantry, mere play with ideas and phrases. The real " proof " in this and similar questions can be derived only from experience. The bourgeois regime all over the world is undergoing the greatest revolutionary crisis. Now the *revolutionary parties must prove by actual deeds that they possess sufficient class consciousness, sufficient power of organisation, are sufficiently in touch with the exploited masses, have enough determination and efficiency to take advantage of this crisis for a successful victorious revolution.*

The only alternative before the working class in Great Britain is to unite under revolutionary leadership and transfer the fight against all forms of capitalist attack on the workers (through wages and " dole " cuts, tariffs, rationalisation, raising of prices, persecution of revolutionary fighters and organisations, &c.) into a fight for the overthrow of capitalism and for the establishment of the workers' dictatorship.

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# THE WORKERS' WELFARE LEAGUE OF INDIA

*By* K. S. BHAT
*(President of the League)*

EVEN Tory politicians had recognised by 1915 that bad labour conditions anywhere inevitably worsen conditions everywhere. Indian labour conditions have been studiously kept at a low level.

About 1916 a body of British and Indian sympathisers with labour met to consider how the workers of the two countries could get rid of their share of the blame for the maintenance of low labour conditions. So the Workers' Welfare League of India was formed, independently of all political aims or movements to advocate the institution in India of provision for the welfare of the working population, equivalent to, if not identical with, that granted to the workpeople of Great Britain; and to propagate among the democratic bodies of Great Britain the general principle that orientals have the same claim to human rights as occidentals, including the right to organise and form Trade Unions. The object of the League was to press British democratic bodies for their support of the various efforts made to enable Indian workers to obtain measures of Workers' Welfare such as reduction of hours of labour, raising of age for child labour, total abolition of indentured and impressed labour, payment of wages weekly, education of the children, improvement in housing and sanitation, increased and adequate provision for disabled sailors, soldiers and their dependents, and so forth.

To prevent any possibility of either the British or the Indian section going against the interests of the other, the constitution of the League provided that no work could be undertaken which had not been sanctioned by a separate majority in each section. Only common ground could therefore be traversed. Of this there was, and there still remains, plenty. The activity of the League was typified by:

(1) The sending of trained people from here, who organised Trade Unions in India and established the All-India T.U.C., of which the League has been the representative here for many years since its formation.

(2) The offering, publishing and circulating of evidence before the Joint Committee of the Houses of Parliament on the Government of India Bill (the "Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms") to the effect that

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if the whole Bill could not be referred back on account of its ignoring the workers of India and seeking to accentuate the existing anti-labour privileges, the following amendments at least were essential :

(*a*) Introduction of popular franchise to include all workers and soldiers ;

(*b*) Questions of labour legislation to be treated as indivisible questions, that is, applying to the colonies and the home country alike ; full franchise rights to be given to the workers in India before control over them is transferred to non-labouring classes in India ;

(*c*) Statutory recognition of the right of Indian workers to combine ;

(*d*) Humiliating anti-labour laws like the Assam Emigration Act and the Madras Planters' Labour Act, and the practices of impressment of labour, indentured labour, and recruitment of labour by the agents of private companies with direct or indirect government assistance to be abolished forthwith ;

(*e*) An Indian Labour Ministry to be introduced into parliament ;

(*f*) The practice of " safeguarding " labour interests through government nominees and not through those elected by the labourers to be given up ;

(*g*) Immediate reforms in wages, hours of work, &c., for the employees of the Government of India.

The Workers' Welfare League also aims at :

(1) Collecting information about labour conditions in India with bearings on British conditions, and circulating it through the columns of papers and by means of pamphlets, leaflets, and periodical bulletins

(2) The sending of speakers to workers' organisations to describe Indian labour problems and conditions and how they bear on the British workers' lives.

(3) Holding periodical conferences to consider outstanding problems and occurrences so as to enable British and Indian workers to help each other effectively.

(4) Circularising the British clergy, a large number of whom at one time professed labour sympathies and showed some interest in the welfare of the Indian masses.

(5) Securing and sending financial and other help to Indian workers during labour troubles.

(6) Parliamentary activity directed towards pressing forward legislation in the interests of Indian labour, especially centreing round the right to organise.

(7) Urging and securing delegations to go from here to India to investigate and report on labour conditions there, especially among the mining, jute, textile, and tea and coffee plantation workers.

(8) Acting on behalf of the workers in settling industrial disputes, securing, sometimes with retrospective effect, compensation for injured workers and redress for victimised ones.

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Such work naturally found support from members of all political parties ; and the League kept, and still keeps, apart from all the parties. Many attempts were made to absorb the League into one political party or another, but they all failed. So did the opposite type of attempt, namely, to get the League to exclude from membership individuals or organisations associated with one or other political party. Work alone mattered, and party feeling did not count.

The pioneer work done by the League can no longer be undone. In the teeth of every type of opposition, as a direct result of the League's work, the Indian workers have caught enough of the spirit of self-reliance never to lose it again. The workers of this country, if they want, can, through the Workers' Welfare League of India, take advantage of this spirit and help it to grow into a free union with their own independent class consciousness. Or they can let the Indian workers also get absorbed into the various party machines as is slowly happening in Britain. The last general election showed how some workers were bamboozled into the party machines to the ruination of their own interests.

For parties which do not make the workers' interests their sole concern, cannot help some day or other fooling the workers who support them. Class conscious unity among the workers of course makes this fooling impossible, and every fresh bond between workers makes it more difficult of accomplishment. The Workers' Welfare League of India is one of the few organisations in this country which help to create such a bond between British and Indian workers. I invite, therefore, every worker and workers' organisation here and in India to join us and use our common table to sit round and discuss and solve all problems to mutual advantage.

To *mutual* advantage. It is true that so far most of the help has gone from Britain to Indian workers. But the time is near when British workers will need Indian help. Already a foolish antagonism is being created and fostered between the two. Already the Indian workers are being used indirectly against the British. The day is not far off when a direct conflict between the two will be engineered by the enemies of both. The Workers' Welfare League of India alone, acting as it does solely for the workers, seeks to prevent this conflict. Join us, therefore, and study at our common table, with your fellow workers of the other country, the forces and movements against both, and help to bring together into close friendship the workers of the two countries now being forced apart.[1]

[1]All offers of help should be addressed to the Secretary, 23 Great Ormond Street, W.C. 1.

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# MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

## *By* J. STALIN

[*The concluding section of the article written by Stalin in* 1913, *now published in English for the first time. Two sections have been omitted dealing with the particular problems of "The Bund, its Nationalism and its Separatism," and "The Caucasians, and the Conference of the Liquidators." Previous chapters appeared in the* LABOUR MONTHLY, *June, August, September and November*, 1931.]

### VII.—THE NATIONAL PROBLEM IN RUSSIA.

WE still have to indicate a positive solution to the national question. We start from the postulate that the question can be resolved only in inseparable connection with the present moment in Russia.

Russia is passing through a transition period, when "normal," "constitutional" life has not yet been established, when the crisis is still unresolved. Hence the movement existing and developing, the movement which has the same objectives as in the year of the first uprising (1905).

The national question has to be considered in connection with this question.

Hence the complete democratisation of the country, as the *basis* and condition of solution to the national question.

In solving the problem not only the internal but the external situation has to be taken into account. Russia is situated between Europe and Asia, between Austria and China.

The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. Capital is finding itself restricted in Europe, but it breaks out in foreign countries, seeking new markets, cheap workers, new points of application. But this leads to external complications and war. It is wholly possible that there will be a conjunction of internal and external circumstances in which one or another nationality in Russia will find it necessary to raise and solve the problem of its independence. And of course in such a situation it is not for Marxists to stand in the way.

But from this it follows that the Russian Marxists will not succeed without the right of nations to self-determination.

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Thus the *right of self-determination* becomes an *indispensable point* in the solution of the national problem.

Further. What is to happen to nations which for one reason or another prefer to remain within the framework of the whole ?

We have seen that cultural national autonomy is unsuitable.

First, it is artificial and lifeless, for it presupposes an artificial compression into one nation of peoples whose life, real life, disunites and scatters them into various parts of the State.

Secondly, it drives on to nationalism, for it leads to the point of view of the " delimitation " of peoples on national lines, to the point of view of " preservation " and cultivation of " national peculiarities "—which in no way leads in the direction of social democracy.

It is not fortuitous that the Moravian separatists in the Reichstag, when they separated from the German social-democrats, united with the Moravian bourgeois deputies in a single, so to speak, Moravian " circle." It is not fortuitous that, in advancing the Jewish " Sabbath " and Yiddish as a national language, the Russian separatists of the Bund stuck fast to nationalism. There are no Bund deputies in the Duma as yet, but in the Bund district there exists a clerical-reactionary Jewish community, in the " guiding institutions " of which the Bund is organising at present an " alliance " of Jewish workers and bourgeoisie.[1] That is the logic of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *national* autonomy does not solve the question.

Then, where is the way out ?

The only true solution is *regional* autonomy, the autonomy of such defined units as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Caucasus, &c.

The advantage of regional autonomy consists first and foremost in the circumstances that under it one has to deal not with a fiction having no territorial basis, but with a definite population, living on a definite territory.

Furthermore, it does not delimit peoples according to nations, it does not strengthen the national barriers ; on the contrary, it breaks down these barriers and unites the population in order to open the road to a delimitation of another kind : delimitation by classes.

Finally, it affords the possibility of exploiting in the best possible manner the natural riches of the region and of developing the productive forces, without waiting for the decision of a central authority—a function not inherent in cultural-national autonomy. Thus *regional autonomy becomes an indispensable point* in the solution of the national problem.

[1]Report of the VIIIth Conference of the Bund.

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There is no doubt that not one of the regions presents a solid nationally homogeneous unit, for national minorities are included in every one of them. Thus there are Jews in Poland, Latvians in Lithuania, Russians in the Caucasus, Poles in the Ukraine and so on. Consequently there might be a danger of the minorities being oppressed by the national majorities. But the danger has basis only in the event of the country remaining under the old order of things. Let a complete democratism exist in the country and the dangers would lose all basis.

It is proposed to unite the scattered minorities in a single national union. But the minorities have need not of an artificial union, but of real rights on the spot. What can such a union give them without complete democratisation? What necessity is there for national union if the country is completely democratised?

What especially agitates a national minority?

The minority is dissatisfied not with the absence of a national union, but with the absence of right to their own language. Give them the right to use their native tongue, and the dissatisfaction will pass of itself.

The minority is dissatisfied not with the absence of a national union, but with the absence of freedom of conscience, freedom to move about, and so on. Give them these freedoms, and they will cease to be dissatisfied.

Thus, *national equal rights in all their forms* (*language*, *schools*, *&c.*) *becomes an indispensable point* in the solution of the national problem. The general state law drawn up on the basis of a complete democratisation of the country and prohibiting all forms of national privileges without exception and without any kind of restriction or limitation of the rights of the national minorities—in this, and only in this can there be a real and not a paper guarantee of the rights of the national minorities.

The existence of a logical connection between organised federalism and cultural-national autonomy may or may not be disputed. But it is impossible to dispute that the latter creates a favourable atmosphere for unbounded federalism, passing into a complete severance, into separatism. The Czechs in Austria and the Bundists in Russia, who began with autonomy and passed to federation, ended with separatism, and undoubtedly a considerable rôle was played in this development by the nationalist atmosphere which national autonomy naturally spreads. It is no accident that national autonomy and organisational federation go hand in hand. That is understandable. The one and the other demands delimitations by nationalities, and the one and the other presupposes organisation by nationalities. The resemblance is indisputable. The difference consists solely in the circumstance that in the one case the population generally is delimited, and in the other only the social-democratic workers.

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We know what the delimitation of the workers by nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a single workers' party, the break-up of the unions according to nationalities, the intensification of national rivalry, national strikebreaking, a complete demoralisation in the ranks of social democracy—such are the results of organisational federalism. The history of social democracy in Austria and the activity of the Bund in Russia eloquently bears witness to this. The sole resource against this is organisation on the basis of internationalism.

The consolidation in the localities of the workers of the various nationalities in single and whole collectives, the consolidation of these collectives in a single party—that is the task.

It goes without saying that such a structure does not preclude, but presupposes a broad autonomy of the regions inside the single party whole.

The experience of the Caucasus shows the entire expediency of this type of organisation. The Caucasians have succeeded in overcoming the national rivalries between the Armenian and the Tartar workers, they have succeeded in ensuring the population from possible slaughters and shootings, in Baku—a kaleidoscope of national groupings—national conflicts are now impossible, they have there succeeded in drawing the workers into a single stream of a mighty movement, and in all this the international structure of the Caucasian social democracy has played no little rôle.

The type of organisation influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impress upon all the intellectual life of the worker. The worker lives with the life of his organisation, he grows intellectually and is educated in it. And so, moving in his own organisation and meeting there with his comrades of other nationalities, carrying on with them a general struggle under the leadership of the general collective, he is profoundly permeated with the idea that the workers are *first and foremost*, members of a single class family, members of a single army of socialism.

And this cannot but have an enormous educative significance for the wider masses of the working class.

Consequently the international type of organisation is a school of comradely feelings, of great agitation in favour of internationalism.

That is not so with organisation by nationalities. Organising on the basis of nationalities, the workers are shut up inside the national integuments, are cut off from one another by organisational barriers. The emphasis is laid not on what is *common* to all the workers, but on what distinguishes them from one another. Here the worker is *first and foremost* a member of his nation: a Jew, Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that *national* federalism in organisation instils the spirit of national separation into the workers.

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Consequently, the national type of organisation is a school of national shortsightedness and ossification.

Thus we have two types of organisation different in *principle*: the type of international consolidation and the type of organisational "delimitation" of the workers by nationalities. The attempts to reconcile these two types have so far been without success.

The "reconciliatory" constitution of Austrian social-democracy, drawn up in Wimburg in 1897, was left suspended in mid-air. The Austrian party was shattered into sections, taking the unions with it. "Reconciliation" proved not only utopian, but even dangerous. Strasser was right in declaring that "separatism gained its first triumph at the Wimburg Party Conference."[2]

The same is true of Russia. The "reconciliation" with the federalism of the Bund which occurred at the Stockholm Congress ended in complete defeat. The Bund broke the Stockholm compromise. The very day after the Stockholm Congress the Bund became an obstacle to the fusion of the workers in the localities into a *single* organisation, including the workers of all nationalities. And the Bund stubbornly continued its separatist tactic, despite the fact that in 1907 and 1908 Russian social-democracy several times demanded that the unity from below among workers of all nationalities should be at last realised. Beginning with organisational-national autonomy, the Bund passed in practice to federalism in order to end with a complete severance, with separatism. And in breaking with Russian social-democracy it brought into the latter dispersion and demoralisation. Remember even the case of Jagiello. Consequently, the road of "reconciliation" must be forsaken, as being utopian and injurious.

One of the two: *either* the federalism of the Bund, and then Russian social-democracy will be reorganised on the basis of "delimitation" of the workers by nationalities; *or* the international type of organisation, and then the Bund will reorganise itself on the basis of territorial autonomy, on the lines of the Caucasian, Latvian, and Polish social-democracy, so opening the road for the task of immediate unification of the Jewish workers with the workers of the other nationalities in Russia.

There is no middle way: principles triumph, but do not "reconcile themselves with one another."

Thus, *the principle of international consolidation of the workers is an indispensable point* in the solution of the national problem.

(*Concluded.*)

[2] See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1912.

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# BOOK REVIEW

## THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST REVIEW.

*The Anti-Imperialist Review.* (Vol. I. No. 1. Sept.-Oct., 1931.) Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, S.W.48, Friedrichstrasse 24, Germany. 6d.

THIS month we welcome a new bi-monthly publication, the *Anti-Imperialist Review*, the organ of the International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism. The first number contains articles ranging over all phases of the anti-imperialist struggle, from general articles on the problems of imperialism to a detailed analysis of the revolutionary struggles in China, India, Indo-China and the National Minorities of Europe.

In an Editorial entitled " Why We Appear," it is stated that

> This journal will provide a weapon for rallying forces to the League, for extending and developing the front of anti-imperialist struggle, for spreading and popularising the slogans of the League and for consolidating and unifying the ranks of those fighting for the overthrow of imperialism. It will be a powerful force for the achievement of that close unity and co-operation between the struggling masses in the colonial and the revolutionary workers in the imperialist centres on which the outcome of the struggle so largely depends.

In one of the concluding paragraphs of the Editorial this call is made:

> A new world order must be created, based on the complete independence of the present colonies and semi-colonies, on the complete self-determination of the many subject peoples, of the hundreds of millions who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the earth.

Most interesting are contributions from two of the best known revolutionary writers, Maxim Gorky and Henri Barbusse, outlining the work of the League against Imperialism.

An article by D. Vlachoff on the " Anti-Imperialist Struggle of the Oppressed Nations and National Minorities of Europe " is a very timely contribution to a much-neglected phase of the struggle for national independence. He points out in the course of a very careful and informative article that in at least two states in Europe the " minorities " constitute as much as 60 per cent. of the population. Yugo-Slavia, for instance, has 13 million inhabitants of which 8½ million do not belong to the dominant nationality. Similarly in Czecho-Slovakia with 14 million inhabitants, 8 million belong to minorities. It is urgently necessary that the struggles of such peoples be unified in the general anti-imperialist struggle along with the revolutionary proletariat, the working farmers and the broad masses in the colonial and semi-colonial struggles.

" F," in a long article, summarises the results of the session of the International Executive Committee of the League held in June, 1931. It is in reality a whole history of the development of the League from the time of its foundation at the Brussels Congress in 1923 to the present day. One of the most interesting and instructive parts of this is the history of the development of the National Reformist organisations, such as the Kuomintang and the Indian National Congress, from revolutionary organisations to groups openly siding with the imperialists. The rapid growth of the mass revolutionary movement in the colonies after the war menaced the privileged position of the national reformists who were drawn mainly from the native landlords and capitalists. They sought to turn the revolutionary movement aside in return for concessions which were insignificant from the national point of view. This process of the



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differentiation of the national reformists from the anti-imperialist fighters took place in two stages. The first, the open capitulation of the nationalist organisations like the Kuomintang, who immediately turned their arms against the struggling masses, corresponds to the period between the Brussels and Frankfurt Congresses. The second, the gradual degeneration of the Indian National Congress, which, by a series of manœuvres and bargains with the imperialists, sought to gain their class ends whilst holding the rising mass movement in check, corresponds to the period since the Frankfurt Congress in 1929. This period also witnessed the retreat of the "Left" social reformists in the imperialist countries like the retreat of the I.L.P. in England.

Other shorter notes and articles deal with the "Colonial Policy of the Second International," the "French Colonial Exhibition," and "The Flood Catastrophe in China."

Last, but of greatest importance, are the reports from the colonies, from the organisations of the oppressed masses in all parts of the world. It is here that a most important field of development for the publication lies: in bringing to light and co-ordinating the anti-imperialist struggle throughout the world. As the journal gets more widely known these reports will increase and make the journal the voice of the oppressed masses. Herein lies one of its main objects.

Attractively bound and at the moderate price of 6d. a copy, it represents an important addition to the library of current international literature.[1]

**A.E.H.**

## *PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED*

*What is to be done?* By V. I. Lenin. (Martin Lawrence. 176 pp. 7s. 6d.)

*Capitalism in Crisis.* The Labour Research Department. (16 pp. 1d.)

*Rum.* By H. Warner Allen. (32 pp.). *Go Back to Gold.* By Frederick Benham. (44 pp.). *This Writing Business.* By Michael Joseph. (32 pp.). *Murder by Jury.* By Rodger Napier. (48 pp.). In the series *Criterion Miscellany.* (Published by Faber and Faber. 1s. each.)

*Lancashire and the Far East.* By Freda Utley. (Allen and Unwin. 395 pp. 16s.)

*The Food Combines.* By W. Fox. (The Labour Research Department 28 pp. 3d.)

*Unemployment.* By O. Piatnitsky. (Modern Books Ltd. 48 pp. 6d.)

*A Letter to an M.P. on Disarmament.* By Viscount Cecil. (The Hogarth Press. 38 pp. 1s.)

*Railway Nationalisation.* The Railwaymen's Minority Movement. (24 pp. 1d.)

*Memories and Reflections.* By Ben Tillett. (John Long. 286 pp. 18s.)

*Socialism and War.* By V. I. Lenin. (Martin Lawrence. 48 pp. 9d.)

*Property: A Study in Social Psychology.* By Ernest Beaglehole. (Allen and Unwin. 321 pp. 10s. 6d.)

*Empire and Prosperity.* By the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery. (Faber and Faber. 80 pp. 6d.)

[1]Subscriptions will be taken for six issues at 3s. 6d. post free by the British Section of the League Against Imperialism, 23 Great Ormond Street, London, W.C. 1., from the American Section, Anti-Imperialist League of the U.S.A., Room 339, 799 Broadway, New York, (Subs. $1.00,) or direct from the Head Office, Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, S.W.48, Friedrichstrasse, 24, Germany (Subs., M.4.).

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